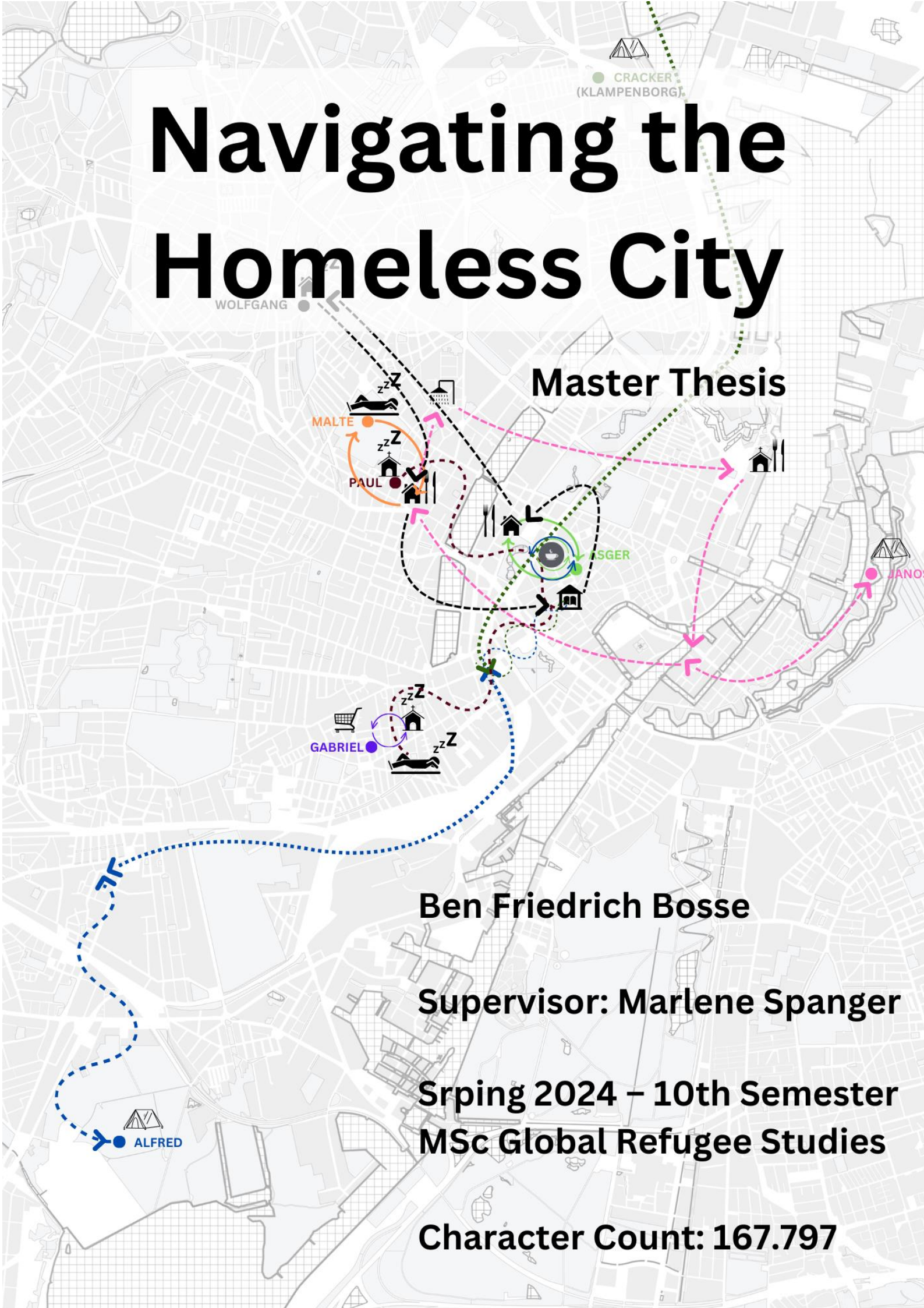
Navigating the Homeless City



Master Thesis

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate the manifestations of homelessness and home in the everyday practices of homeless people in Copenhagen. Contributing to an empirically grounded understanding of urban homelessness in the field of human geography, I look at the spatiotemporal navigation of my informants within the shifting geographies of homelessness, tracing varying notions of home emergent in their rhythms and routines.

Set against the backdrop of legal and institutional regulation of homelessness, this research acknowledges the restrictions put upon people living in homelessness. In Denmark, limited night shelter availability, hostile design and restrictive legislation of public space pose significant challenges to life on the streets. But while recognizing the importance of work scrutinizing punitive measures towards the urban homeless, this thesis wishes to move beyond the documentation of repressions and instead focus on the homeless themselves, exploring their use of the city. The perspective of the homeless holds valuable lessons for city planners and politicians alike. Thus, an in-depth exploration of spatiotemporal practices on the city margins offers the possibility of developing alternative and more inclusive urban spaces.

Drawing on 6 months of ethnographic research among homeless men in Copenhagen, including 9 in-depth interviews, I lay out their various strategies of getting by in their everyday life, with a marked focus on the spatial, temporal, and normative implications of their daily practices. This perspective allows a detailed understanding of the varying spatiotemporal rhythms and routines manifesting in the lives of my informants. Following their various everyday trajectories, this reveals the potentials for *isorhythmia* and the risk of *arrhythmia*, as the homeless can be seen fall in and out of sync with the pulse of the city. Implementing the concept of *social navigation* (Vigh, 2006), I show how homeless people exhibit remarkable resourcefulness and creativity in the face of recurring adversities. Moreover, a focus on *homemaking* reveals complex and unexpected iterations of home within homelessness, showing the potential for home in the territorial claim to public space and in the enactment of spatiotemporal routines. Arriving at an many-layered and open-ended position of *home(lessness)* (Lancione, 2023), this thesis points to new directions for developing the notions of home within homelessness.

Introduction

Recently started as a volunteer at Grace, a day shelter for homeless people, I took a shift on a Friday morning for the weekly free shower at the local bath house:

It's a quiet day at the shower. We sit at the round table, more volunteers than guests. Conversations are rolling slowly, people sip their coffee, scroll on their phones.

Out of a sudden, Janos bursts into the room – walking into the room in great strides, he immediately fills the room with his booming voice and sweeping gestures. He launches on a tirade from the second he enters the room, obviously riled up about something happening this morning, but setting it into the context of injustices suffered for many years and the failures of a broken system.

*All faces are towards Janos, his intensity commands attention. As we look at him apprehensively, Kristof, one of the other guests, in a mixture of annoyance and problem-solving interjects: "Look…" but gets cut off by Janos with a harsh "Shut up". Kristof responds angrily, "I wanna help you!" And Janos pauses just enough for Kristof to add, "At ***, there is a place where they give help to people like you." This seems to enrage Janos even more, fuming back, "I need no help! There is no help! And what I hate most of all, is interruptions." He goes on with his tirade, but as we let him steam off, he finally storms off to the showers. There is a ringing silence at the table, as we all try to figure out what the hell just happened.*

When I speak to Janos later, he sits next to me visibly calmer, with towels wrapped around his shoulders and flinging his long, wet hair back. He seems to have a need to set the earlier episode into context, asking me if am familiar with the concept of an "enclosed system". I plead ignorance, and he explains to me how certain problems exist within a closed space. "The problem comes from the system, so it cannot be fixed in the same system". He tells me that this is why he completely blew on the guy: not only had he destroyed his "beautiful trajectory" of his rant, which he illustrates forming an arc with his hands. He had also suggested a solution that to Janos totally sidestepped reality: homelessness could not be solved by the system that created it.

Janos' reflections were not coming from nowhere; he was speaking from his own experience. He had ended in homelessness, after losing his job and getting stuck in a legal battle over the undue grounds of his termination. While the shelters fulfilled his basic needs, for him, this was survival, not help; his strong dependence on the shelters only cemented his unwanted position in homelessness. In fact, having built a place he called *"home"* himself outside of town, for him, the use of the shelters created his position as homeless to begin with. This brings us right to the heart of the matter of this thesis.

For how could one navigate within the condition of homelessness and to what ends? Was there potential for home within homelessness? Or did any sort of home presuppose leaving homelessness?

In recent years, ending homelessness has been announced in Denmark as a societal goal across the political spectrum and the civil sector. The new homeless reform, effective from October 2023, is geared specifically to "end long-term homelessness and reduce the number of homeless people significantly" (Social- og Ældreministeriet, 2021). Also the Copenhagen municipality, 'home' to 25 % of the country's homeless (Benjaminsen, 2022), has made the elimination of homelessness one of their four strategic priorities for action for the period of 2023 to 2025 (Boje, 2023).

But there is an enduring paradox in the spatial and social politics towards the homeless population in Denmark. On the one hand, there is an increasing awareness of the importance to create an inclusive city, that is, build an urban environment that is for everyone, especially the socially marginalized and economically vulnerable (Beskæftigelses- og Socialudvalget, 2024). Openness and diversity are put to the fore when setting city development goals, and participation of citizens in the planning process is prioritized in recent years (Aarhus Kommune, 2024; Københavns Kommune, 2024). The sentiment of becoming "En by med plads til alle" has taken firm hold in the political vision of Copenhagen as a city (Københavns Kommune, 2019). As recent as October 2023, Copenhagen signed the homeless bill of rights, thus declaring publicly a political will and responsibility to safeguard the access of homeless people in the city to a list of basic human rights (projekt UDENFOR, 2023).

And yet, the city's recent history is teeming with examples of displacement of especially the homeless population through a variety of city development practices. Unchecked gentrification of the inner districts of Copenhagen has swallowed up many hidden corners acting as safe havens for those using the city differently (Socialministeriet, 2010). Infrastructure projects like the giant metro construction undid several central hangout spots used by a diverse crowd of social misfits, many of them homeless. And the recent proliferation of elements of hostile design throughout the city has further limited the options available for people living on the streets to find shelter, rest, or simply – yet no less importantly – places to hang out (Modler, 2020). What is more, legislation introduced in recent years has criminalized a variety of what the NGO Projekt Udenfor calls "viable survival strategies" (projekt UDENFOR, 2020), such as begging, sleeping in groups, and erecting protective structures around their sleeping spots. At the same time, the outlined political ambitions to end homelessness have not always translated into more finances for shelters, with many shelters in Copenhagen denouncing the city government for denying them sufficient funds (Dahl, 2024; Mouvielle, 2023).

Possibly the signing of the Homeless Bill of Rights is the best example of the contradictory approach Copenhagen has towards the city's homeless: as the only city among the European signatories, the city government signed under the caveat of not actually intending to secure all 11 rights. For 2 out of the 11 rights are directly in conflict with current Danish legislation and will thus not be protected (Valentin, 2023).

In the light of these contradictory developments, it becomes more relevant than ever to pay close attention to the social group of people that stands in the center of it all: the homeless of the city of Copenhagen. Arguably the population group using public spaces most intensively, their everyday use of these spaces is seldom made visible. Such an oversight can make us blind for the needs of the urban homeless or the concrete consequences of city development measures on their lives. But it also dismisses the significant part the homeless themselves play in shaping the city; as human geographers have directed attention to, homeless people inevitably take part in the co-production the urban environment (Cloke et al., 2008; Howley, 2001). As I witnessed myself time and again in my research, the people I met on the streets were surprisingly resourceful, exhibiting both inventiveness and resilience in the face of the many adversities of homelessness. Whether creating spaces of home in public space from scratch, building daily routines of traversing the city to find food, do laundry and generate income, or scrapping and revising their plans for sleeping arrangements in a trice – rather than being the problem, I often found my informants creating solutions. On this account, city developers and policy makers alike should pay close attention to the daily practices and spatial strategies of homeless people. Not only to find sustainable solutions for homelessness in the urban environment, but also to develop alternative visions of the city that integrate the perspectives of the homeless. It is here that this MA thesis hopes to make a contribution.

The work is based on ethnographic research among 10 rough sleepers living in Copenhagen, who I engaged with repeatedly over the course of 6 months, all across town: at shelters, libraries, and their personal spots. With the above descriptions in mind, I was interested in my informants' navigation of the city within the condition of homelessness and the potential for alternative notions of home. Set in the context of *geographies of homelessness*, I draw on the concepts of *social navigation*, *spatiotemporal rhythms*, and *homemaking* to explore the various strategies my informants employ to get by in their everyday life. Wherever the limits to navigation become apparent, I investigate the consequences in relation to the notions of *evictability* and *placelessness*.

Thus, I pose the following research question:

Which spatiotemporal strategies do homeless people in Copenhagen employ to navigate the shifting geographies of homelessness? And which notions of home emerge from their practices?

In order to engage with this inquiry, I will first give an overview of relevant literature, in chapter 1, followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework in chapter 2. Then, in chapter 3, I will describe in detail the methodology of this thesis. After a brief introduction of additional context in chapter 4, I will dive into the analysis in chapter 5. Starting with a presentation of my informants in xxx, I then explore the main themes of this thesis in close relation to the research question. Lastly, I discuss the results and draw a conclusion in chapter 6

CH 1: Literature Review

In the following, I will introduce relevant research on the topic of homelessness and position this MA thesis in relation to the existing literature on homelessness, in order to elucidate the topical focus and academic contribution of this MA thesis. I will begin with an introduction to the field of human geography, laying out the two main strands of research on homelessness: the 'punitive frame' and more ethnographic approaches. After presenting a number of studies closely related to this MA thesis, I will then move on to give an overview of research on homelessness in a Danish context and end this chapter by spelling out the specific trajectory of this MA thesis.

1.1 Human Geography

Homelessness has been researched in various disciplines, ranging from medical studies and psychology to economics and sociology to anthropology and human geography. For the aims of this study, of particular interest is the field of human geography and its many contributions to understanding homelessness in an urban context.

1.1.1 The Punitive Frame

Until the early 2000's, what DeVerteuil et al (2009) called the "punitive frame" held much sway over the debate. Amid ideas of the carceral city (Davis, 1990) and the post-justice city (Mitchell, 2001), it was arguably Neil Smith's (1996) notion of the "revanchist city" that became most enduring in capturing an escalating degree of urban injustice. Smith here gave a forceful depiction of how policy makers, police, and an increasingly hostile public in cities around the world used increasingly drastic measures to rid public spaces off the homeless. This meant quite literally, "'taking back' the parks, streets and neighborhoods from those who had supposedly 'stolen' them from 'the public'" (Smith, 1996: 216).

These works established in all clarity, how homeless and other marginalized populations were pushed to the margins of the city, away from *prime* spaces, that is, "showcase public spaces used by entrepreneurs and politicians for commercial and symbolic purposes" (Langegger & Koester, 2016: 1035). From the mid 20th century onwards, these spaces became the ground for fierce efforts at renewal and rehabilitation, a process emblematically captured in the pervasive and destructive phenomenon of gentrification (Smith, 1996). Studies on the exclusion of homeless people from public cities (see May & Cloke, 2013 for an extensive overview) have shown how such city re-developments have relegated the homeless to *marginal* spaces of the city, that is, isolated locations far away from city centers (Langegger & Koester, 2016: 1036).

Mitchell (2022) has recently added to this strand of literature with a historicized account of recent policies and juridical cases against the homeless. He makes a strong case for the increased

"legal meanness" of the streets, with the rights and practices of homeless people being curtailed in ever more extensive ways. Empirically based in the US, his account nonetheless resonates strongly with developments in Europe and Denmark in particular (Aldanas, 2020).

1.1.2 The Complexity of Messy Middles

The above accounts have been of enormous importance to document and problematize repressive policies against homeless people, in the process inciting new debates on issues of justice, urban citizenship, and the right to the city (May and Cloke, 2013). But as a number of scholars have pointed out (DeVerteuil et al, 2009; Lancione, 2013; May and Cloke, 2013), an excessive focus on the "punitive logic" in governing homelessness risks painting an overly simplified and one-sided picture of reality. In this regard, DeVertuiel et al. (2009) highlighted that homelessness itself as well as the responses to it by authorities and the wider public are strongly context-dependent, showing enormous variability across different locations. Rather than a generalized *collapse* of homeless space, "geographies of homelessness proliferate" (DeVerteuil et al, 2009: 651), with the concrete configurations of service provision, policy, and responses by the homeless population showing an ever-increased complexity. It is useful to unpack this complexity for a moment to gain a more nuanced understanding of the shifting geographies of homelessness and how they shape the conditions for the life as a homeless person.

On a policy level, despite discernible policy transfer from the US to other parts of the world, the approaches towards homelessness are shown to vary considerably between countries and similarly between cities of the same country (May & Cloke, 2013). Punitive measures can often be found to be counter-balanced by more inclusionary politics focusing on Housing First principles (O'Sullivan, 2012) or an increase in emergency shelter beds (DeVerteuil et al, 2009). In several case studies researchers concluded that, in fact, there was no evidence of a punitive approach to homelessness (Huey, 2007; Laurenson and Collins, 2007). Even in places with highly repressive anti-homeless policies, enforcement would by no means be unilateral and sometimes downright rejected by the executive branch (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2005). Caution is in order, too, against simply assuming malign intent behind anti-homeless measures on the part of policy makers (DeVerteuil et al, 2009).

With regard to the homeless populations, experiences of homelessness can be seen to differ significantly according to a range of identity markers, including age, gender, ethnicity, and accompanying struggles to homelessness, like substance abuse or mental illness (DeVerteuil et al, 2009: 650). Especially the kind of homelessness – sleeping rough, using shelters, sofa surfing – strongly affects the degree of exposure to punitive measures, so depending on the local demographics of the homeless population, their response to anti-homeless policies will differ, too (May and Cloke, 2013).

With these variables in mind, it seems to make little sense to focus on repression only and "to document more examples of the same" (DeVerteuil et al, 2009: 651). Instead, it calls for an

exploration of what May and Cloke (2013) called the "messy middle ground" between legislation and policies on the one hand and the day-to-day life and struggle of homeless people on the other. It is exactly here, in this messy middle ground, that I aim to make a contribution with this MA thesis, and I will now turn to discussing the corresponding literature.

1.1.3 Ethnographies of the Homeless City

In recent years, analytical attention has increasingly turned to more ethnographic accounts of people experiencing homelessness, creating fine-grained and context-specific understandings of homelessness in the urban context (see e.g., Cloke et al., 2008; Daya & Wilkins, 2012; Duff, 2017; Johnsen et al., 2008; May & Cloke, 2013; Radley et al., 2010; Smith & Hall, 2018). This research foregrounds the experience of homelessness in the city from the perspective of the homeless themselves, with a decidedly open-ended approach as to what to find. With a focus on the spatial dimension of homelessness, researchers look closely at the built environment, their subjects' movement through city space, and the various restricting and enabling factors of the urban surroundings. At the core of this work lies a commitment to Howley's argument that, "the urban environment […] both shapes, and is shaped by, all those who inhabit it, including the city's homeless" (Howley, 2001: 349). This twofold process, this co-production of urban space becomes part and parcel of any exploration of homeless populations situated in the urban context.

Rather than speaking of the monolithic "revanchist city" (Smith, 1996), we find here the idea of many-layered urban space that comprises a range of overlapping geographies of homelessness. Following Cloke et al. (2008), this MA thesis uses a dynamic concept of the *homeless city,* not as a fixed entity but as a configuration shaped in part by the practices of the homeless themselves. For instance, it is evident that geographies of service provision constitute a substantial building block of the homeless city, with homeless people "developing specific routes around such service nods" (Cloke et al, 2008). At the same time, however, a considerable portion of people experiencing homelessness are found to actively avoid shelters (Fahnøe, 2018; Langegger & Koester, 2016; Schneider, 2022). This resonates with the accounts of informants to this MA thesis, who often went to great lengths to find alternative solutions.

The ethnographic literature on the homeless city is thus in large parts an "exploration of the maps of the homeless city drawn up by homeless people themselves" (Cloke et al, 2008). This allows for alternative practices to become visible. Radley et al. (2010) have shown the importance of walking in the lives of homeless people, as it serves three purposes at once: the means to get somewhere, a condition of being in the city, as well as an occasion to re-experience the surroundings and imbue it with new meanings. Langegger & Koester (2016) pointed to the various ways, in which the city's surroundings are utilized as storage facilities by homeless people, helping them to manage their visibility in being perceived as 'obvious' homeless. Wardhaugh (2000) has documented, how homeless people appropriate interstitial spaces of the city, like doorways or public restrooms, "effectively commandeer[ing] them for private use" (Cloke et al., 2008). With any of these practices,

homeless people are actively engaged in shaping their surroundings. As they make varying claims to and uses of space, they co-produce a layered territoriality of the city (Smith & Hall, 2018).

Particularly important in this regard become efforts of the homeless at place and home making, through which individuals may wrest a stronger sense of emplacement from their general condition of detachment. A productive strand of literature (Lenhard, 2022; McCarthy, 2020; Parsell, 2010; Paul, 2022; Schneider, 2022) looks closely at spatial and social practices of homeless individuals aimed towards creating meaningful surroundings. This research documents in detail how people experiencing homelessness try and succeed in varying degrees to establish temporary conditions for the kind of stability that runs contrary to their general living situation. Lenhard's (2022) description of his informants' practices to order their surroundings and bring small but decisive parts of it under their control, stands exemplary to illustrate the vital importance for homeless individuals of asserting some measure of control over their lives. This control is most visibly established materially. But Schneider (2022) and Parsell (2010) showcased compellingly, how a sense of emplacement can equally stem from social relations, temporal order in the form of routines, or a general affect rooted in the locale.

There are, of course, limits to the extent of influence homeless individuals have on their living situation. As Pleace et al. (2021) warn, a focus on the agency and self-determination of homeless people must not fall into the trap of idealizing "ultimately transitory adaptative behaviours", nor "underplay the 'manifest injustice' of being without an orthodox home" (Pleace et al., 2021: 317). To prevent ethnographic approaches from becoming trivial, Lancione (2020) has proposed a politicized notion of "radical housing" that takes seriously potentials for entirely different forms of housing at the margins. This point I will return to in the Discussion.

The many-layered homeless city emerging from the above accounts provides the point of departure for this MA thesis and will act as a continuous reference point, as I add insights from my own ethnographic work on the geographies of homelessness in Copenhagen. With this in mind, it is pertinent to take a closer look at existing research on homelessness in Denmark.

1.2 Research on Homelessness in Denmark

In Denmark, there are relatively few researchers working on the issue of homelessness, with many reports on related issues coming from government sources and the NGO sector. Here, studies on and advocacy for the homeless in Denmark in recent years have explored, among others, unregistered homeless migrants' access to the health sector (Ravnbøl & Barbu, 2020), the experience of young adults in homelessness (Aalbæk, 2017), and homelessness experienced by women (Maini-Thorsen, 2018).

More recently there has been an increase in publications, with mainly two strands of literature manifesting. First, rooted in the field of urban studies, the research team around Ole B. Jensen has documented, problematized, and theorized on the issue of hostile design in public spaces

(Jensen, 2022, 2023). Second, taking departure in migration studies, a small but growing body of work has focused on the difficult situation of homeless migrants in Denmark, coming from within and outside the EU (Juul, 2017, 2022; Kastanje et al., 2012; Mostowska, 2014; Ravnbøl, 2017). This research mainly discusses issues of citizenship, access to the welfare system, and general exclusion from society, which are only marginally relevant to this MA thesis.

An exception is the study by Juul (2017), who explored the geographies of homelessness in her research on West African homeless migrants, identifying bottle picking, the extensive use of shelters to minimize living expenses, and the practice of irregular camping as important survival strategies. More firmly based in the field of human geography, Fahnøe (2018) added to this knowledge in his study of shelter avoidance among street homeless in Copenhagen. In mapping their emotional geographies of the city, Fahnøe points to patterns of socio-spatial exclusion that arise from his informants' negative experiences with shelter places. As the physical surroundings and materiality become inextricably bound up with strong negative feelings, these lasting associations constitute a significant barrier to lending the needed support to a portion of the urban homeless population. As mentioned before, such sentiments resonate with many of my informants, making this a useful reference point for this MA thesis.

1.3 Survival in the Danish Capital: Mapping Copenhagen's Geographies of Homelessness

Having outlined several strands of literature from human geography relevant to the research endeavor at hand, I can now more accurately spell out the contribution of this MA thesis. Acknowledging the importance of both restrictive approaches to homelessness that follow a punitive logic and the manifold ways homeless people navigate and shape their surroundings themselves, it is the ambition of this MA thesis to contribute to a more ethnographic understanding of the homeless city. Taking inspiration from studies exploring the city's dynamic geographies of homelessness, I aim to further the understanding of various alternative mappings of Copenhagen, as seen and produced by the city's homeless. This will add to the emergent knowledge of the socio-spatial context of homelessness in Copenhagen, as discussed in the research by Juul (2017) and Fahnøe (2018).

I shall now proceed to flesh out more in depth the central theoretical tenets for this thesis, in close dialogue with existing literature.

CH 2: Theoretical Framework

In the following, I will outline the leading concepts of this MA thesis. Four concepts are central when engaging with the given research question: first, the complex of place and space will be delineated, establishing the conceptual groundwork for engaging with the geographies of homelessness. Second, I will flesh out the role of spatiotemporal rhythm in the use of the city. Third, the concept of social navigation is introduced and related to the lives of homeless individuals. Fourth, I discuss the notion of home as an inescapable reference point to any conception of homelessness. Drawing on all four concepts, I lay out the productive potential of homemaking practices and sketch out the limits of navigation within homelessness, as related to experiences of placelessness and evictability.

Throughout, this discussion is informed by a focus on the co-production of geographies of homelessness. Encompassing the interplay of both space/place, spatiotemporal rhythms, navigation and different instantiations of home, it functions as an overarching conceptual lens that allows for a nuanced look at the agency of homeless subjects and the structures surrounding them.

2.1 From Space to Place

The terms *space* and *place* are at the center of any exploration of people's interaction with their surroundings. In line with Cresswell, we can think of space, "as a realm without meaning – as a "fact of life" which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life" (Cresswell, 2015: Ch. 1, sect. 2). As we create attachments to a portion of space, imbue it with meanings by naming it or creating memories around it, over time it becomes a place. As Tuan puts it, "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Tuan, 1977: 6). Thus, if the setting of this MA thesis is urban space, then its focal points are places. *Place-making* activities are a natural part of all human engagement with their surroundings, but they gain particular importance when there is no 'natural' place-base in the form of permanent housing. Following Tuan's analogy of space as movement and place as pause, it becomes crucial to have both:

> *The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.* (Tuan, 1977: 6)

Often for homeless persons, this is not an uncontested process. Not every location is suited to be made into a personal place, but neither is the act of place-making tolerated everywhere. Hostile design, zone bans against public camping, or the prohibition of sleeping in libraries are all examples of policing parts of public space in a way that opposes certain behaviors associated with homelessness

(see also Mitchell, 2020). As Cresswell argues in his work on spatial transgression, “space and place are used to structure a normative landscape. […] Something may be appropriate here but not there” (Cresswell, 1996: 8). Only then does it begin to make sense to speak of certain behaviors or groups of people to be deemed ‘out of place’. Navigating the geographies of homelessness then also entails navigating an “apparently commonsensical notion of out-of-place” (ibid.: 7) that traverses urban space for the homeless.

These considerations do not make sense with a static understanding of space. The function and meaning of spaces are actualized in the lived practice of its users, the city dwellers. It is important to include the role of time inherent in creating and questioning different spaces and their function.

2.2 The Rhythms of the City

When looking at the city as a spatial setting, it is important to remember that this is never a fixed configuration that builds the unchanging backdrop to the activities of its dwellers. As Ardle emphasizes, “Space is instead becoming, an eventful happening, while time is the fluid that makes space come alive; neither time nor space are containers or frameworks” (McArdle, 2020: 34). In this sense, time can be read as the inscription of meaning into space, giving rise to a variety of spatiotemporal rhythms that manifest across the city.

Traditionally, such rhythms were of a collective nature, as institutional schedules of work, school, and the opening hours of shops were largely synchronized and provided for predictable flows of movement through the city, of work commute, shopping, and various trajectories of leisure activity. But with the diversification of working routines and the extension of activity into the night we have arguably moved towards what Crang (2001) calls “the non-stop city” or Smith and Hall (2013) refer to as the “24-hour-city”. This city of constant movement and activity becomes the “site where multiple temporalities collide” (Crang, 2001: 189), overlay each other, and come into friction, coming together “not necessarily as unified wholes but as sometimes fragmentary and ragged patterns” (ibid.: 190). The movement of the city’s homeless people is part and parcel of this kaleidoscope of different spatiotemporal rhythms.

However, the fact that they co-produce these shifting configurations of timespace should not obscure the fact that their rhythms can often be at odds with other, more dominating rhythms of the city. Drawing on Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis of the city, McArdle (2020) and Mulíček et al. (2015) show that the categories of *arrythmia* for a dissonance of rhythm, *polyrhythmia* for a parallel rhythm, and *isorhythmia* for a complete synchronization are useful analytical categories to describe the dynamic of varying rhythms.

From this perspective emerges a spatiotemporal reading of the geographies of homelessness, as constituted by both the various places of the city and the routines of the homeless traversing them.

2.3 Social Navigation

It is within the shifting geographies of homelessness that Henrik Vigh's (2006, 2009) concept of social navigation becomes relevant. "Navigation" comes from the latin "*navigare*", meaning "to sail over and go by sea" (Vigh, 2009, 420); navigation describes movement over a moving terrain. When applied to social relations, navigation refers to the dynamic interplay between social formations and people within them. It is not only actors that move through time and social formations; the very environments which form the basis for people's movements are themselves in a state of continuous evolution. The concept of navigation highlights *motion within motion* (Vigh, 2009, 420).

This "motion squared" is highly applicable to the living situation of my informants, where unexpected changes both in their surroundings and in their own disposition often confront them with a suddenly altered set of circumstances, requiring a different course of action. For instance, when planning on a night at a shelter, losing the 'bed lottery' might mean that the ensuing 8 hours will have to be spent roaming the city. Institutional circumstances are just one way the geographies of homelessness are shifting in a variety of ways and at different tempos. Legal changes might be inconspicuous, virtually inconsequential for life on the streets, until an arrest could make a sudden, lasting impact. Dwindling resources of the charities might be felt as a slow, incremental effect, with provision of services suffering over time. Other circumstances are more predictable, as they follow a recurring pattern: the coming and going of seasons, the alternating rhythms of the city. Still, they demand adjustment and might impact individuals differently at different times.

In the context of uncertain living conditions, the lens of navigation makes visible people's adaptive decision-making to get by. As Vigh puts it,

> *When navigating we imagine and actualise a path through unstable social terrains, simultaneously moving across the next obstacle or wave and negotiating the many more to come on one's way along an envisioned course. (Vigh, 2006: 54)*

In this way, the act of navigating resembles rolling with the punches, taking things as they come. And indeed, Vigh developed the concept based on the notion of *dubria* that his informants used to wiggle their way forward in life, constantly adjusting to changing circumstances in an elaborate sequence of shadow boxing (Vigh, 2006). Like Vigh's informants, my informants, too, are faced with a social environment with such unpredictability that social navigation becomes a crucial skill.

As mentioned before, people do not only move through the shifting terrains around them, they also co-produce them. Ever-present as a spatiotemporal but also emotive reference point is the home, which I will discuss in the following.

2.4 Home(lessness)

If place is space imbued with meaning, then "without exception, the home is considered to be the 'place' of greatest personal significance" (Prohansky et al. in Easthope, 2010: 135). Overwhelmingly, the connotations and meanings we ascribe to the idea of home are positive; we associate security, well-being, intimacy with the notion of home (Schneider, 2022). In lending protection from the outside gaze and providing constancy in otherwise ever-changing surroundings, home has been described as a source of "ontological security" (Easthope, 2010: 134). Especially in the Western sphere, the focus on security and privacy has made home almost synonymous with housing (McCarthy, 2020; Schneider, 2022), with the latter providing the "protective shield against the harms and vulnerabilities of this world" (Schneider, 2022: 233). The conflation of home and house has contributed to housing becoming a marker of status, and conversely, imbuing the lack of housing with a strong stigma.

In speaking of homelessness, the notion of *home* is present as an always-already given. As Lancione (2023) has argued forcefully, the *lessness* rests on the powerful allusion of the home that represents at once the lost ideal and the aspired goal for the homeless. In this way, the idealization of the home sphere mirrors a more generalized favoring of sedentarism in the Western sphere (Malkki, 1992). With rootedness as a condition with overwhelmingly positive connotations, the act of (forced) re-location is always conceived of as a loss and a state of constant mobility as lacking arrival. Homelessness can be seen as the quintessential expression of such restlessness and rootlessness, which imbues it with a powerfully tragic notion.

But of course, just as the nation is the source of great oppression and violence, neither is home always the idyllic place it is made out to be. Feminist scholarship has long exposed "the darker underbelly of home" (McCarthy, 2020), where home can be experienced as a place of fear, violence, and entrapment. Many of my informants had a troubled relation with classic iterations of home, and the outlook of finding a home again was not only a source of longing but also of anxiety and reluctance.

2.5 Homemaking

A critical look at the concept of home shows that there is some emancipatory potential in looking for home outside of the classic four walls (Lancione, 2023). While this thesis does not engage at length with Lancione's more structural argument around "a new politics of home" (Lancione, 2023), this perspective does add renewed relevance for looking at alternative constructions of home and will be revisited in chapter 6. In this context, *homemaking* is an important practice that homeless individuals engage in.

Homemaking is a multi-layered process that can consist of different processes: the establishment of an actual space to inhabit, the creation of meaningful social bonds around that place, and the attachment of certain positive emotions. For most people this process will unfold over

a long period of time in relation to the same physical space: the parents' house that provided a childhood home; the student housing that is imbued with meaning through social interaction and the gradual accumulation of personal assets; the flat that becomes the space for a first joint home with the partner. Any of these common tropes of creating a home, however, presuppose a continuity of the living space over time and a clear demarcation in space, whereby a private, safe sphere is created and separated from the public sphere. For homeless persons, neither temporal nor spatial stability is a given. Thus, creating and maintaining a home becomes a much more transient and conditional practice.

As Schneider (2022) shows in her fieldwork amongst homeless in Leipzig, Germany, in this context a sense of security and belonging can be attached to relations and practices not traditionally associated with the idea of home. First, home can manifest through relations, with homeless people finding "family of choice" that can afford a sense of stability. Second, home can be enacted in routines, as street dwellers engage in recurring spatiotemporal practices. Third, home can be made to mirror traditional notions by "re-enacting privacy in the public sphere". This loose typology of home for people in the context of homelessness will build the analytical lens, when looking at the manifestations and the meaning of home to my informants.

2.6 The Limits to Navigation: displacement, evictability – and placelessness?

Regardless of how we problematize the dominant notions of home and place favoring rootedness and emplacement (Lancione, 2023; Malkki, 1992), the fact of the matter remains that, "'It is the struggle for home and for place, the tiring transience of 'the experience of being unplaced,' [Casey,] […] which remains always central to homelessness felt and lived" (Robinson, 2011: 79). And indeed, nearly all of my informants spoke to this issue, with the "tiring transience" leaving palpable marks on them. As much as there always is a "somewhere" for homeless people to momentarily be situated in or move towards, Robinson makes a striking case for how the experience of homelessness is one of continual displacement. This resonates with the experience of my informants, for no matter the individual situation, they were all over time put through "a series of dislocations" (Robinson, 2011: 21).

Each displacement can be read as a manifestation of a general condition of *evictability*, which describes in a broader fashion "the possibility of being removed from a sheltering place" (van Baar, 2017: 215). Van Baar originally used this lens to elucidate the precarious situatedness of Romani migrants, finding that "eviction and the fear to be evicted have become peculiar incentives to increase, rather than decrease, forced mobility and differential inclusion" (ibid.: 223). This assessment holds analytical merit for the broader population of homeless, as *evictability* describes a foundational condition of homelessness, that of being exposed to the powers that be. Whether that is a shop owner telling them to leave, a police officer charging them with illegal stay in public space, or a stranger beating them up at their sleeping spot, both in a physical, social and legal sense, the homeless are extremely vulnerable.

It is important to remember, however, that the condition of evictability does not suspend homeless individuals in complete placelessness. Just as navigation as an expression of their agency has its obvious limits, so do the structural conditions around them not represent a monolithic force that obliterates their potential for place making. Following Robinson, every displacement "immediately gives rise to the struggle for place" (Robinson, 2011: 81). Even at the most extreme end of dislocation then, there is never complete placelessness – as Casey (1993: 13) aptly phrases it, "to exist at all as a (material or mental) object or (an experienced or observed) event is to have a place—*to be implaced,* however minimally or imperfectly or temporally". Or as Robinson puts it more poetically, "Place is an ember of being with which one may lose contact, but that never quite dies out" (Robinson, 81).

It is the ambition of this MA thesis to explore that space in-between: never quite placeless yet continually displaced, always engaged in acts of navigation yet constrained in a number of ways.

CH 3: Methodology

This MA thesis constitutes a case study of a selection of Copenhagen's homeless people, investigating their navigation of the geographies of homelessness by the means of ethnographic fieldwork. In the following, I will elaborate on the methodological choices informing this work, beginning with some remarks on the underlying epistemology, followed by a description of my research design. Thereafter I will flesh out the meaning of ethnographic fieldwork for this MA thesis, followed by a presentation and discussion of my empirical material. Lastly, I will lay out a number of ethical considerations relevant to my research.

3.1 Precursory Remarks on Epistemology

This thesis subscribes to a constructivist understanding of the world, where reality is always socially constructed by subjects in a given situation and where it thus is nonsensical to conceive of an objective set of facts 'underneath' this construction. But of course, in order to make any meaningful statements about the observed reality, any qualitative inquiry has to subscribe to a certain degree of realism; or as Olivier de Sardan (2015) puts it, "all researchers assume *in practice* that there exists a "reference reality" operating beyond our consciousness and individual experience" (Olivier de Sardan, 2015: 2). This "realist hypothesis" makes observations and descriptions about an external reality possible and communicable, and it is this form of *realist constructivism* that builds the epistemological foundation of this MA thesis.

On the one hand then, interactions with informants are understood to be socially constructed and open to multiple interpretations. Yet fundamentally, there is something to be said about these interactions that holds analytical merit and can add to our understanding of certain parts of the above-mentioned "reference reality". In relation to this MA thesis, we can thus reasonably hope to gain new insights about not only the individual realities of my informants, but also about their relation to the wider geographies of homelessness. This dynamic epistemological relation between the narrow empirical setting and its wider context constitutes the basic premise of the *case method* that I now will flesh out in more detail.

3.2 Research Design: A Case Study of Homeless People in Copenhagen

In designing qualitative research, a certain degree of rigor is in order to ensure that the chosen empirical material is not only relevant to the given research question but also delimited in a sensible, non-arbitrary fashion. For this MA thesis, I chose to circumscribe the empirical field by articulating a case, that is, "an edited chunk of empirical reality where certain features are marked out, emphasized, and privileged while others recede into the background" (Lund, 2014: 224). As the headline suggests,

this is a case study of homeless people in Copenhagen. But of course, that falls short of an actual description and is way too broad a focus.

In the most concrete sense, the "edited chunk of empirical reality" for this MA thesis comprises the experiences and behaviors of a selection of rough sleepers in Copenhagen. But is first the theorization of collected materials and research experience that allows the empirical data to be understood and analyzed as the instantiation of general theory – a case (Blommært & Jie, 2022). Lee Schulman (1986: 11) put this succinctly, arguing that,

> *A case, properly understood, is not simply the report of an event or incident. To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim—to argue that it is a 'case of something,' or to argue that it is an instance of a larger class.*

It is useful then to dwell on the question for a while, as Lund (2014) posed it in his methodological inquiry, "Of *what* is this a case?"

Table 1. Analytical Matrix

	Concrete	Abstract
Specific	Observations	Concepts
General	Patterns	Theories

Using his analytical matrix (see figure above), this is a *specific* case of social and spatial navigation employed by a certain part of the homeless population in Copenhagen. This will be outlined in more detail presently. In a *general* sense, it is a case of survival strategies in the context of contemporary urban homelessness. This is laid out in more detail in the literature review. In a *conceptual* sense, this is a case of the co-production of urban space by city dwellers and regulators. This will be explored in the analysis chapter. Finally, in a *theoretical* sense, it is a case of the mutually constitutive dynamic between society and its margins. This will be foregrounded in the discussion of this thesis.

As all of the above levels of analysis speak to each other, together they make for the case at hand that can hope to make a knowledge contribution, by connecting empirical observations in this case with overarching categories of cases. In Lund's words, we look for *resonance*, meaning that, "different elements, dynamics, and relations could be recognized from one case to the other" (Lund, 2014: 226). For this MA thesis, such elements of resonance are the spatial strategies employed

by the urban homeless, their conceptions of home, and the present geographies of homelessness – each of these have instantiations in this thesis, which can be usefully related to other cases in the reviewed literature.

Having established the general contours of the case for this research, I will now go on to discuss its main method: ethnographic fieldwork.

3.3 Ethnographic Fieldwork

In researching the geographies of homelessness, it was clear from the outset that ethnographic fieldwork had to be the method of choice and would be the primary source of information. People's uses of space, their movements through it, their experience of living in it, the emerging rhythms of places cannot be deduced from afar; their identification requires immersion and careful attention in situ.

Ethnographic fieldwork encompasses a wide range of practices and is informed by a long-standing scientific tradition within anthropology (Blommært & Jie, 2022; Matera & Biscaldi, 2021; Okely, 2020). For this MA thesis an engagement with ethnographic fieldwork is to signify a commitment to its central methodological tenets: participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, and the use of field notes.

At its core, ethnographic fieldwork is the method to bring about a meaningful description of places and people (Blommært & Jie, 2022). But as Matera & Biscaldi (2021: 15) pointed out, "'Being there' in itself has no value"; for else the natives of any given setting would produce the best ethnographies themselves. An ethnographic inquiry has to be informed not only by a topical focus; rather, "theoretically oriented ethnography is necessary in order to go beyond the surface of everyday projects, actions and words" (Matera & Biscaldi, 2021: 17). Having laid out the theoretical tenets of this MA thesis in chapter 2, I will now move on to more concrete considerations and experiences regarding the implementation of ethnographic fieldwork.

3.4 Jumbled Ethnographies: Researching Homelessness

Working ethnographically with homeless people presents a flurry of challenges. The topic of homelessness itself is many layered and complex. But the people experiencing homelessness make up a group that is at once incredibly varied (DeVerteuil, 2009), vulnerable in multiple ways (Sebastian, 1985), difficult to get a hold of for formalized appointments (Smith & Hall, 2018), and living a life in such unpredictable circumstances that their availability and ability for partaking in research can change from one day to the other.

These chaotic research conditions are reflected in my material, which presents many interesting data points but is anything but cohesive. There are, of course, more smoothened and controlled interactions in the form of recorded interviews that allow a systematic treatment. But these are complemented by bits and pieces of material from short encounters, small interactions,

observations in passing. Sometimes the supposed cohesion of recorded conversations was downright negated in encountering dead ends and absences. People that did not or could not show up were a recurring part of my research.

And so was the unnerving experience of not finding people, where I had assumed I would. Or *when* I thought I would. Time and space both played a vital and strongly interlinked role in conducting my fieldwork, as the geographies of homelessness shaped and moved themselves in certain rhythms – something I will return to in this thesis. What I had to concede along the way was that I, as a non-homeless person, was fundamentally *out* of rhythm with the people I was engaging with. I could tap in and out of their worlds, but my positionality as a housed individual following the dominating rhythms of the city was ever present (Schneider, 2022).

I attempt to give full disclosure about the mishaps and slippages of my research endeavor, so as to lay bare the limitations of my findings.

3.5 The Ins and Outs of Fieldwork

This thesis draws on 6 months of fieldwork in different locations of Copenhagen, including interviews, participant observation, and informal talks, all accompanied with field notes.

3.5.1 Motivation

Initial interest for this thesis stemmed from my internship, where I took part in a collaborative project on drawing alternative maps of Copenhagen. One of them covered the issue of *hostile design*, and I started to interview homeless people about their experiences with exclusionary spaces in the city. I was interested in their perspective from the streets: what did it mean to encounter physical obstacles against a prolonged stay in public space, when you were dependent on exactly that? But though they all had a story to share, conversations quickly shifted to matters dearer to their heart. These people were so used to making do, to adapt to shifting circumstances, to change that hostile design hardly presented a unique challenge. It was just one more element added to the shifting terrains of homelessness they were navigating daily.

What they wanted to tell me about, what they were eager to share, was *how* they made do. The various ways they had found to wrest a daily existence from their life on the streets. As I let their points of interest guide our conversations, a different kind of map materialized: not so much of physical barriers in a hostile city, but more a personal map of their surroundings, as they used and fared in it. It became clear that enabling as well as restricting factors for their mobility and everyday wellbeing on the streets stemmed from a wide range of influences, exceeding the factor of hostile design: the access to and quality of support structures, the legislation impacting people living on the streets, the presence or absence of healthy social relations.

Fascinated by the intricacy of their everyday strategies of getting by, I started to explore more in depth how my informants arranged their lives on streets and how unexpected notions of home could arise from their seemingly home-*less* existence.

3.5.2 The Target Group

The target group for this thesis was the wider homeless population of Copenhagen, with a particular interest in rough sleepers. In Denmark, this sub-group of the homeless population is estimated to make up around 10 % of all registered homeless (Benjaminsen, 2022). Under the widespread ETHOS definition of homelessness (FEANTSA, 2017), rough sleepers are characterized not only by being houseless, but also roofless, living on the streets, in public places, in cramped or abandoned buildings, in parks or under bridges. Being exposed to the outside world directly and without support structures, rough sleepers constitute the most vulnerable group of homeless. But in more than one way, they are also some of the most resourceful – exactly *because* they make do without little or no outside help (see for example Schneider, 2022). In circumventing some or even most institutionalized solutions to their everyday needs, rough sleepers resort to highly individualized strategies for navigating the geographies of homelessness.

I did not, however, narrowly restrict recruitment to rough sleepers. This was mainly due to the blurry lines between categories, with some informants going in and out of shelters, sleeping rough for shorter or longer periods of time.

Two other remarks are due with regard to the make-up of my sample of homeless. The first pertains to gender, as all research participants are male. Partly, this reflects the demographics of homelessness and especially rough sleeping, where the latest count has found less than 20 % of them to be women (Benjaminsen, 2022). Also, women are generally less visible as homeless in public space (Sikich, 2008). But even with the women I met at one of the shelters, the fact that I am male noticeably affected interactions. I was generally met with a reserved and guarded manner, and I experienced only one exception with a Czech informant. Thus, my data contains a strong male bias and though certain experiences as homeless transcend gender differences, this thesis should be understood as casting light primarily on the situation of male homeless.

A second note is due on the matter of ethnicity and migration status. My sample covers only the experiences of people from Denmark or other European countries, as the work of Juul (2017, 2022) and Kastanje et al. (2012) has explored the situation of especially West African immigrants in depth. I am aware and confirmed through several informal conversations that the realities of being homeless can be vastly different for people of non-European origin, in terms of legal issues, access to the job market, and experiences of racism (see especially Juul, 2022).

3.5.3 Empirical Material

In the end, I conducted in-depth interviews of at least 1 hour with 10 different subjects of varying nationalities, ranging from Danish (3) to Romanian (3) to German (2) to British (1) to Hungarian (1). Interviews were conducted in German, English, and Danish, with one interaction aided by my rudimentary knowledge of Spanish. With all the informants, I had multiple encounters, often creating an ongoing relation. This had the significant advantage that I could grasp their living conditions more fully, as well as see them develop over time. I will introduce the informants more fully prior to the analysis chapter.

I had contact to two different shelters in my research. Initial access to and contact with the target group was mediated by the shelter and café *Hugs & Food* during my internship in the previous semester. Throughout the entire thesis, I was volunteering at *Grace Kbh,* a shelter and café for homeless people. Both places were vital for recruitment of informants, general knowledge of the field, and countless informal encounters that enrichened my understanding of my research topic.

All data was collected in Copenhagen, spread over a wide variety of places. The most frequented places for the research were *Hugs, Grace*, and *Sjællandsgade Bad*, the latter being opened for homeless visitors by *Grace* on Fridays. This forming the base of my field, I then conducted interviews with informants all over town: at different libraries, at people's self-declared place of residence, at their hangout or workplace, and in parks.

3.5.4 Narrative Interviews

Recorded conversations with informants took the form of *narrative interviews* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018), focusing on the stories that the interviewees told about their experience as homeless in Copenhagen. The probing question was *"Can you describe an average day in your life to me?"* A typical *grand tour question* (Spradley, 1979: 86), this question encouraged elaborate description on the informants' part. The progression of an exemplary day provided a useful scaffolding for our conversation, from which we could digress and return to as needed. In this way, the conversations covered more than specific episodes but stopped short of covering a complete life history (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018: 84).

Even though the interview structure was loose and open, there was a common collection of themes that I explored in all interviews, informed by the thrust of my research question. Accordingly, I explored the creation and maintenance of routines, by asking into recurring activities and important spatial nodes in the lives of my informants; the spatiotemporal and figurative constructions of home, by asking into my informant's conceptions of home and re-tracing various spatiotemporal solutions they had found to cover their basic needs; and the limits of their navigation, by asking into experiences of displacement and of being out-of-place.

As the interview progressed, I assumed the position of an active listener, only occasionally asking for clarification or elaboration, as summarized aptly by Brinkmann & Kvale:

> *After the initial request for a story, the main role of the interviewer is to remain a listener, abstaining from interruptions, occasionally posing questions for clarification, and assisting the interviewee in continuing to tell his story. (2018: 83)*

In this way, I co-produced the narratives of my interview partners, trying to elicit narratives from participants, being cautious of steering conversation neither too much away from topic nor too far away from the interviewee's own interest.

3.5.5 Conversation, not Interrogation

Overall, I could confirm Blommært and Jie's emphasis on the importance of engaging in a *conversation* exploring certain *topics,* rather than entering an interrogative Q&A format (Blommært & Jie, 2020: 46). On several occasions, I found myself trying to steer conversations back to the area supposedly more relevant for my research question. This made for awkward breaks in communication, and I could literally observe the jarring effect sudden questions could have. More and more, I let tangents take the time they needed – not only did they serve a purpose for the interviewee, but they also allowed me to take mental stock of the interview's progress, browse through the conversation for outstanding points of interest, and plan ahead. Moreover, I learned to stay open to unexpected relevance:

> *S/he is only getting sidetracked in your universe, in relation to your research questions. But the side-tracking may be precisely what there is to find out: a connection between things, one that you had not previously spotted, but which the informant establishes by his/her seemingly erratic and weird jump from one topic to another. (Blommaert & Jie, 2020: 55)*

Over time, I posed fewer and fewer hastily pressed question. Especially in informal settings it was helpful to learn to let a potentially interesting story be, if there was not enough time or calm.

3.5.6 Field Notes

As Briggs points out, field notes are 'frozen' instantiations of the researcher's understanding of a situation and related topics at a particular point in time (Briggs, 1986: 99). As such, they offer interesting insights into the research process of the author, not only documenting what we experienced but also *how* (Blommært & Jie, 2020: 37). This is invaluable information in order to re-trace the learning process. Often when consulting my field notes, I rediscovered what Agar (1995) termed *rich points*, moments in the fieldwork, where "you bumped into the boundary of what is readily understandable for you" (Blommært & Jie, 2020: 39).

For example, in my conversations with Gabriel, the harassment by local police was a recurring topic. This to me seemed a clear-cut case illustrating the evictability of homeless people.

But my field notes document an unexpected shift in my understanding of his interaction with the police.

> *He tells me that the police no longer picks him off the streets, as it's new staff, and shrugging his shoulders he says, "Now, they don't even greet me", and it sounds almost like he laments no longer having that contact.*

When looking back at my field notes, these remarks were immensely helpful to ensure a nuanced portrayal of the role of security staff in my informants' lives, keeping in mind the potentially important part even seemingly negative experiences could play in creating a sense of belonging.

Additionally, field notes are a great mnemonic device for remembering certain anecdotes told by conversation partners in passing, outside of the context of recorded conversations. This happened frequently, as the sheer presence of the recording device affected flow and direction of the conversation.

My interactions with Jirka, a Czech woman, illustrate this point, as we had many small dialogues, where she had an inimitable way of delivering one-liners.

> *In front of Nørrebro library I meet Jirka, who proudly presents me to her Polish friend and boasts of our friendship. As her friend leaves, Jirka points at her bags full of empty bottles: "Homeless currency."*

I strove to take field notes immediately after interactions took place to approximate the actual succession of events as closely as possible. From time to time a formulation was so striking that I was able to remember the exact sentence and record this in writing as a short direct quote. I indicate this wherever this is the case, so that the reader can distinguish between the kind of documentation that informed the quote.

Field notes are less fruitful data points, however, for continued engagement, as increased levels of understanding in the present cannot be made use of to re-interpret a given interaction (Briggs, 1986). I tried to stay mindful of this limitation throughout the research process and not to overexert the use of my fieldnotes.

3.5.7 Participatory Attempts

As research progressed, I became increasingly aware of the potential of reproducing stereotypical representations of the homeless. And even if I dodged that pitfall, how could I prevent there to be a divide between me and the homeless subject, between us and them? Trying to heed the call by researchers (Johnsen, May & Cloke, 2008) for more inclusive and participatory research, I aspired to make use of photovoice. Surely, handing over the power of documentation over to my informants

would solve this problem. Surely, they would be excited by the prospect to provide their own perspective, shape how others would see them.

But much to my surprise, I was met with skepticism and hesitation, even discomfort, when presenting informants with the idea. This troubled me deeply, as nothing was further from my intention: I wanted to empower, give some people the chance to show their view, amplify their voice and perspective. It seemed, however, that this was rarely aligned with the interests of my informants. I found myself in conversations, where it sounded like I was asking favors of people, heavily back pedaling when I met resistance.

I was forced to take a long, hard look at the intentions for my research project: was it actually taking form due to an expressed interest on my informants' part, or was I presupposing their interest in this kind of project, as I myself deemed it participatory and empowering and therefore logically interesting? It seemed the latter was the case, at which point I backtracked and focused on my other, less time intensive, less intrusive lines of enquiry.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

3.6.1 Recruitment of participants

In the initial phase of the research, access was mediated and thus smoothened by staff members of *Hugs & Food,* who already had a trust relationship to guests at their café. As such, they acted as what Emmel et al (2007) term *comprehensive gatekeepers*. This type of gatekeeper assumes a balanced role of both resourceful professionals providing specific social services and persons of trust engaging in long-standing relationships with the target group (Emmel et al., 2007: Figure 1). Based on their experience with people frequenting their place, staff could assess who would be eligible for taking part in an interview. As their user group included many people with complex problems, dealing with mental health problems as well as substance abuse, their role as gatekeeper was crucial for the process, ensuring to us that we did not strain persons that were exceedingly vulnerable.

With time, as I began to feel more comfortable with people, I started acting on my own initiative, reaching out to one of my informants, who mediated contact to a homeless friend of his. From here, my sample of homeless people snowballed: each of my interview partners either pointed out another person willing to talk, or they mentioned a place that was promising to seek out, both in terms of gathering first-hand impressions and for establishing contact to further participants. In line with Standing's (1998) assessment of snowballing as conducive to trust and the mitigation of power asymmetries, I experienced it as a key factor to know a common third person. However fleeting the contact, as soon as we knew the same person, there was some basic level of trust that provided an entry point for a mutual conversation.

Whenever there was no initial point of entry through a common familiar person, things proved to be trickier. As I increasingly approached the target group on my own, ethical considerations became more important and missteps more frequent. Without the backing of an organization I

depended solely on the trust of people I approached in my abilities and good intentions. I had always been mindful of gatekeeping as a problematic bottleneck, as the evaluations and choices of a third party would determine the dataset (Neuman, 2014). But working with vulnerable people, I was soon confronted by the ethical conundrum it posed to just 'wing it' on my own. Why would it be relevant for people I approached to participate? What's in it for them? And how could I create situations, where it was ethical to ask something of these people?

And indeed, on several counts I was met with both suspicion and even open hostility. Once, I approached a group of people at Nørrebro St., who used the spot under the bridge as an informal marketplace that I knew had a controversial status among city officials. But as I asked one of them into their encounters with police, his eyes narrowed, and he asked me aggressively, *"Are you police?"* Taken aback, I assured him that I was nothing of that sort, but of course, the situation was hopeless, and I disengaged.

On another occasion, I approached a man I recognized from a short, coincidental interaction at the café I was working at. We had conversed a bit in German, and he had seemed visibly relieved to be able to communicate in his native language, unloading a flurry of unconnected stories. I had given him a coffee on the house, and he had stuck around a bit, getting a much-needed rest. Now I saw him pushing his bike down the avenue, laden with bags upon bags.

> *But as I greet him, he reacts guarded and defensive. His demeanor puts me off, as I realize too late that he does not recognize me and sees me as a stranger intruding. To compensate for my insecurity, I hastily ask in what I intend to be a caring way, "Und, kommst du klar?" ("And, are you getting by?") – at which his eyes bulge out, and he almost spits at me as he bursts out, "If I'm getting by? Do you think I'd live like this if was getting by?" I draw back, and he follows me enraged, "You better fucking get out of here, before I punch you! Get lost! Leave me alone!" and as I hastily retreat to my bike, he keeps shouting insults after me.*

This was not a comfortable experience, and I felt both sorry for having upset the man and being upset myself. These experiences were valuable lessons, showing me the limits of my own engagement, and they led me to abandon this approach of unmediated contact. Instead, I started to use my role as a volunteer at Grace, which 'naturalized' my presence, since I had a discernible function there as a volunteer, independent of my research.

3.6.2 Imposing identity: Speaking to "the Homeless"

Just by approaching and starting a conversation, I was putting the homeless identity onto my conversation partners. After all, this was the reason I wanted to talk to them, to hear about their navigation of the city in their position as homeless. This, however, put a very noticeable divide between us. As long as we just talked, from person to person, hearing how things were going and

sharing as one shares with a friend, it was all good. But depending on the person, there could be a remarkable shift, when I pronounced some intention to ask them in their role as homeless. In those instances, I felt like I was reducing them to something that was neither fair nor conducive to my research, which after all was to promote and amplify the less seen perspectives and seldom heard voices of marginalized people. But does the marginalized want to identify as marginalized? Who am I to label them as such? There are countless problematic ramifications of this imposing process.

Researchers in the field of human geography, housing studies, and anthropology at large have struggled with the issue of fair representation. This challenge is reflected in how scholars conceptionalize "people experiencing homelessness" (e.g. Garner, 2023), separating the person from their experience. Others have shifted the emphasis away from the loaded term of "home", writing instead of "unhoused people" to focus on the descriptive issue of not having access to housing (e.g. Schneider, 2022). And Lancione (2023) took perhaps the most radical step, by unravelling the divide between home and homelessness completely, speaking rather of "home(lessness)" as a sort of general condition that encompasses both people housed and those not. In a different, methodological way, the work by Josie Jolley (2020), too, aims at destabilizing the established categories around homelessness. Drawing on her own experiences of homelessness, she co-creates with research participants a notion of "more-than-homeless". I also acknowledge the importance of participatory approaches in this regard (see for example Clove et al, 2008; Johnsen et al, 2010; Joshua, 2023; McCarthy, 2020; Radley et al, 2010), even as my own attempts at reciprocal research did not bear fruit (see above).

But it is important to remember that all approaches pose their own moral dilemmas, with an insider's perspective not automatically yielding more valid data points (Jolley, 2020). Indeed, being highly familiar with or even "native" to surroundings increases the risk of epistemic blind spots, making it more difficult to assume a critical stance and potentially producing entirely trivial data (Strathern, 1987). Writing as a privileged outsider about experiences on 'the vulnerable inside' is thus a complicated endeavor, but by no means illicit in and of itself. Throughout the research process and especially in writing, I attempted to stay mindful of the risks of ascribing and imposing identities and meanings to my participants and their narratives. Thus, I hope to find an acceptable way of working with what Fabian (1983: xi) characterizes as, "the fundamental contradiction of ethnographic research": the intimacy of prolonged, personal interaction *with* research participants morphing into fixed discourse *about* them.

And while I deem the category of *homeless* useful to render intelligible a shared social position and vulnerability for my informants, I was keenly aware that in a very real and important sense, they are, as Jolley (2020) writes, "more-than-homeless". Arguably, the common denominator for my participants was less the condition of homelessness, seeing as it held highly divergent meanings for them, but rather the situatedness in society as a misfit or outlier, as someone not seamlessly integrating into the matrix of acceptable life scripts. Wherever informants' accounts reach towards the limits of *homeless* as a descriptor, I make this explicit and integrate it into the analysis.

3.6.3 Anonymity and Informed Consent

All interviewees were made aware of the purpose of our interaction and agreed to the recording of our conversation. In most cases I had informal follow-up encounters, where they confirmed their willingness to be part of the study. In order to protect people's identity, all participants were anonymized, their names exchanged for aliases and specific places they frequent have been made unintelligible.

CH 4: Context

4.1 Facts about Homelessness

Homelessness in Denmark is tracked by VIVE's bi-annual "mapping of homelessness". Having peaked in 2017 with a count of 6635, the number has been decreasing since, with the latest count in 2022 registering 5789 people experiencing homelessness in Denmark (Benjaminsen, 2022). This trend has been mirrored in Copenhagen, with numbers going from 1482 in 2017 to 1370 in 2022.

The decrease is attributed mainly to the increased implementation of Housing First strategies, targeted efforts at reducing youth homelessness, and a proliferation of shelters (Benjaminsen, 2022). The decrease in rough sleepers supports this reading, as the numbers for all of Denmark have fallen significantly from 732 in 2019 to 535 in 2022, with half of the national rough sleepers located in the Greater Copenhagen Area (Benjaminsen, 2022)

4.2 The Infrastructure of Help

In Denmark, there are 3 different types of homeless shelters: *herberg* (harborage), *varmestue* (day-time shelter), and *nødovernatning* (emergency night-time shelter).

The day-time shelters are accessible at certain time intervals during the day, providing food and a place to rest, sometimes with access to lockers. All places have a basic stock of clothes available to guests, and some places offer to do laundry or take a shower on specific days. The night-time shelters are open only from late evening till early morning, addressing an acute lack of a sleeping place. Both of the temporary shelter types are low-threshold services accessible to anyone on an ad hoc basis, putting no requirements on users except adhering to a policy of no drugs and no violence. While some day-time shelters offer job qualification programs or help mediate contact with authorities, neither *varmestue* or *nødovernatning* provide comprehensive social work that aims at alleviating the condition of homelessness as such.

In contrast, the *herberg* operates under §110 of the service law and is thus mandated to provide a range of specified services. Users have an assigned room with their own bed and can stay on the premises 24/7, with all their daily needs provided for. Shelter staff is mandated by law to devise an action plan together with users that best address their current problems, always with the purpose of lifting persons out of homelessness. While there is no time limit on people's stay, the group of homeless staying in a *herberg* for more than 2 years, remains around 25 % (Benjaminsen, 2017; 2019; 2022).

While statistics of recent years show a significant increase in shelters (Danmark Statistik, 2020; 2022; 2023), concerns from NGOs and the state audit office persist whether there are sufficient spots for the homeless, particularly in Greater Copenhagen (Hansen, 2022). Emergency shelters,

experience demand exceeding capacity and often resort to 'shelter by chance', that is, issuing sleeping spots by lottery draw (Mølskov, 2022).

Outreach organisations in Copenhagen, like *projekt UDENFOR* and *Street Care,* can play an important role for rough sleepers, establishing relations, handing out gear and a daily serving of food at varying locations in town.

4.3. The Politics of Homelessness

On 1 October 2023, the new Homeless Reform became effective, cementing the *Housing First* approach as national policy in the work against homelessness. Welcomed as an important step by interest organizations, it has nonetheless given cause for concern that the new legislation ties the access to Housing First to a preceding stay at a shelter. This complicates the access of other groups of homeless, like rough sleepers and sofasurfers, who estimates consider to make up around 50 % of the homeless population (Benjaminsen, 2022).

But while there is discernible political effort towards finding ways *out* of homelessness, there is a far more ambivalent political line with regard to protecting those people already in homelessness *while* they are still homeless. Especially the anti-camping law has restrained the physical presence of homeless people in public space.

In 2017 and 2018, Danish parliament passed a number of laws that criminalized the establishment of and stay in "camps creating insecurity" (*utrygheddsskabende lejre)* in public spaces. Infringements can since be fined with a fee of 1000 DKK and a zone ban, prohibiting the charged person of staying in the given municipality for up to 3 months. The criteria for what constitutes a camp and what qualifies as creating insecurity have been critiqued for being vague by NGOs and several political parties (Projekt UDENFOR, 2020). Widely understood to be targeting groups of homeless migrants, the measures have affected the homeless population more generally, of which one of my informants is a vivid reminder (Retsinformation, 2019; Juul, 2023).

CH 5: Analysis

5.0 Informants

All names anonymized and geographical information kept generic to protect the identity of people. Marked in bold the 9 interviewees. Informants are listed in order of appearance in the analysis.

Cracker – around 40, British. Coming from England, he tried to find a footing in Denmark 3 years ago. Unable to secure a work permit, he used up his savings and ended up homeless. After an unstable year, he found himself a camping spot North of Copenhagen and was now independent of most shelters. With the libraries as his fix point in the morning, he spent the rest of his day around town, hanging out with friends, playing the guitar and running errands.

Malte – around 50, Danish. Registered in Aarhus, he had recently come to Copenhagen to get away from some bad influences and reconnect with old friends. He slept rough in varying spots around Nørrebro, heading to a charity for breakfast and spending most of the remaining day at a local café, where he knew the owners.

Janos – 53, Hungarian. An oppositional to the Orban regime, he left Hungary 4 years ago to find safety in Denmark. Living in various places over time, he had now constructed his own place on a semi-floating platform on the outskirts of Christiania, hidden from sight behind bushes and trees in an abandoned patch of swamp land. He sought out several shelters for "feeding time", but otherwise stayed at his place, where he spent most of his time on an online strategy game.

Asger – 57, Danish. Homeless for 12 years, he spent most of that time at his regular spot in inner city by a busy pedestrian street. Known by everyone around, him and his dog led a highly routinized life that seldom took them further than a kilometer away from home. Every morning he hangs out at the local square with Alfred.

Alfred – 68, Danish. Homeless for 13 years, he has only ever had one sleeping spot, out in a park in Valby. Living off of a modest pension, he is almost entirely self-sufficient, only seeking out a charity once a week to wash clothes. Other than his daily morning meeting with Asger, he spends almost all day at 'his' spot at a local library, reading books and watching documentaries.

Erik – around 60, Danish. Homeless for 2 years, he had structured his everyday around the opening hours of shelters and libraries.

Paul – around 40, German. Having stranded in Copenhagen 3 years ago on his way from Hamburg to Helsinki, he stuck around. Mainly staying on his own, he spent most of his waking hours either in the library or doing rounds in the streets to collect bottles. He was used to sleeping rough in various places around the city, only sometimes using night shelters.

Felix – around 40, Swedish. Dissatisfied with life in Sweden, he had come to Copenhagen 8 years ago without a safety net and been in and out of different forms of homelessness since.

Wolfgang – 66, German. Getting to Copenhagen on a whim in the summer of 2023, he was disillusioned by the changes since his first visit in 1975. When I met him in the fall of 2023, he was already planning his leave again. Always on the move, he made use of various day and night shelters.

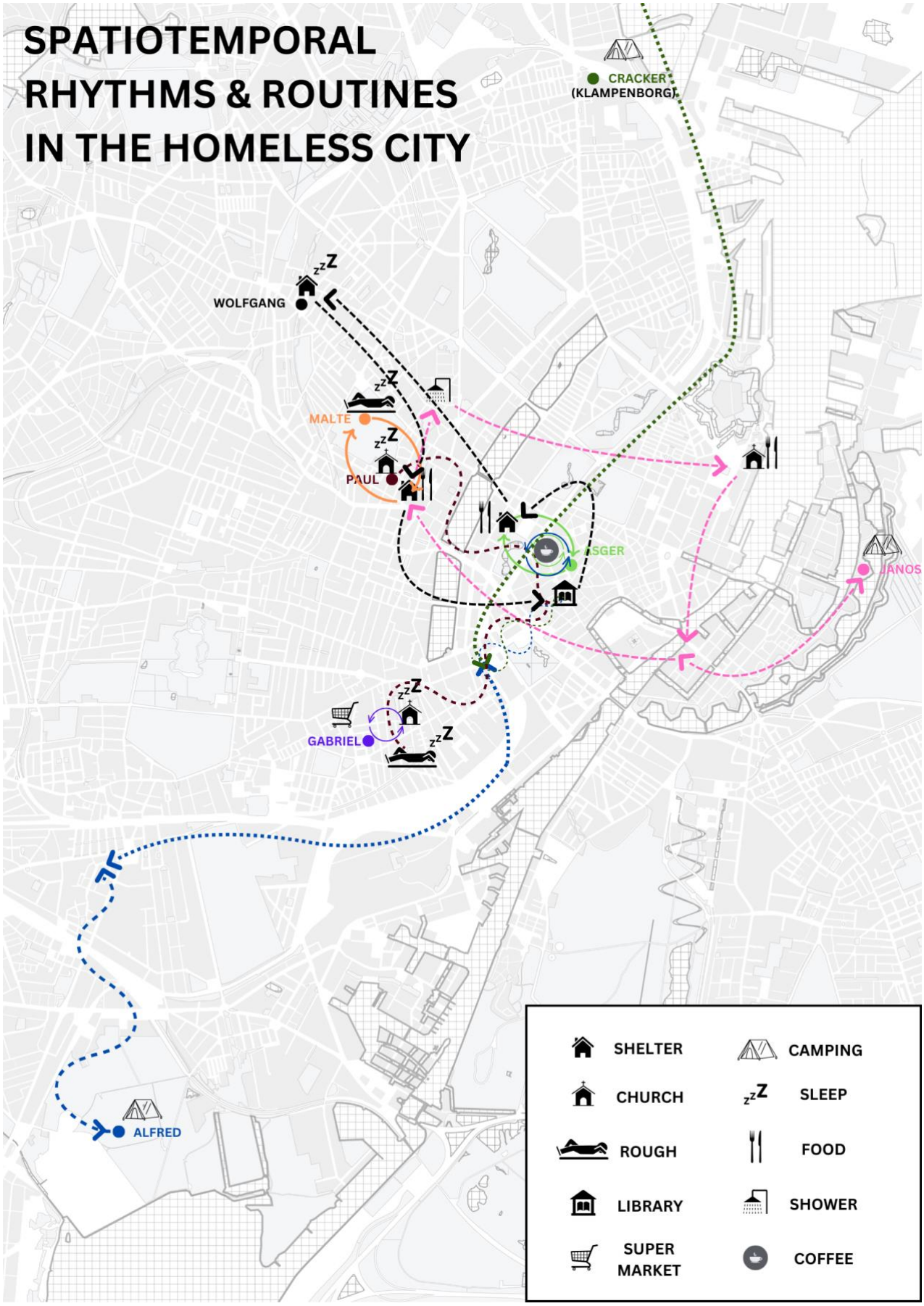
Luca – 28, Romanian. Having come to Denmark from England 4 years ago in search of work, he did not find employment but got stuck with the outbreak of Corona and found himself on the streets. Using a variety of shelters and libraries, working odd jobs and having acquaintances across town, he was usually on the move, often using his journeys to collect bottles or spot valuable scraps.

Gabriel – 39, Romanian. In Copenhagen for 10 years, he was switching between working odd jobs and selling *Strada* or *Hus Forbi*. He had his spot in front of a supermarket on a small street in Vesterbro. Getting shelter and meals at a local church, he spent the rest of his day at his spot, drinking, chatting with the locals, and watching videos on his phone.

5.1 Introduction / Navigating the Homeless City

*When I meet Cracker, he apologizes profusely, telling me that something came up. "That's how it is when you're homeless." He looks tired, as he lays out his dilemma for me. His credit card stolen last November, he has struggled to get it back ever since. His bank from England has sent it twice to ***, where he has registered his address. But twice staff let the letters be returned, saying that "Cracker doesn't stay here anymore". With the card as his only means of finance, he's increasingly stressed by the lack of access to his own money. "Usually I get by, but that week was really tough. You know, when shit hits the fan, it really hits the fan." Not that there wouldn't be enough to deal with, even on the best of days. Food, hygiene, washing, "not looking homeless" as he says – there's quite the list. "Being homeless is a full-time job. You can quote me on that."*

Cracker's story reflects a common struggle among my informants. Their daily routines are fragile constructs, constantly threatened by external influences. Seemingly small practical issues could come to present major challenges, turning homelessness into the *"full-time job"* that Cracker described. My informants had various ways of managing everyday needs, as illustrated in the following map of their routes and routines in Copenhagen.


SPATIOTEMPORAL
RHYTHMS & ROUTINES
IN THE HOMELESS CITY
CRACKER
(KLAMPENBORG)
WOLFGANG
MALTE
PAUL
JANOS
GABRIEL
ALFRED
SHELTER
CAMPING
CHURCH
SLEEP
ROUGH
FOOD
LIBRARY
SHOWER
SUPER
MARKET
COFFEE

The map reveals a rhythmicity in the everyday lives of the homeless, structured by an ebb and flow of movement through the city. The opening hours of service nodes like shelters, libraries, or supermarkets give rise to "pulsing formations" of activity (Crang, 2001), created by the overlay of multiple temporalities. These nodes act as collection points, around which homeless individuals convene before dispersing again.

A place of particular importance for my informants was the shelter. In giving contours to the geographies of homelessness of Copenhagen, I will thus first discuss the function and limits of these spaces in the everyday life of homeless people. Thereafter, I will explore their more individualized ways of getting by.

5.2 Using Shelters: Between Dependence and Avoidance

Even though many of my informants were sleeping rough, one of the day-time cafés or night-time shelters usually constituted a main fix point in the daily routine, whether that be for food, rest, company, getting new clothes, washing used clothes, or taking a bath.

5.2.1 Day-time Shelters: From "Feeding Time" to "the Shower is massive" – Taking What You Need

My informants made highly varying uses of the day-time shelters, catering to their individual needs and preferences. The most common way was to seek out the cafés in the morning to get rest after a long night. Sleeping rough in varying locations, for Malte the morning hours at the day café were a vital respite, where he could fuel up on coffee, food, and warmth.

At times, visiting shelters could become a purely functional exercise. Janos dubbed the opening hours of day-time shelters *"feeding time"*, seeing them as little more than a source of sustenance. As he saw it, they provided food for him, no more, no less. Several of my informants lived by this 'fuel up and go' mentality, where food was stacked up on, and then they left.

An exception was Asger, who did use a charity for a warm meal during the day, even though he was not dependent on the food. With his permanent sleeping spot, he was so embedded in his neighborhood that he could always get a meal close by. Instead, the shelter constituted an important social space for him, where he met other people but especially the shelter's social workers.

Whether socially or practically, there was usually at least one time slot of the week that held big importance for my informants. Alfred had kept away from virtually all support structures and had been homeless for 10 years, before he started building a relation to outreach workers. But every Tuesday it was laundry day at a charity in Amager, and there were no two ways about it.

Even for Janos, who was grudgingly using charities for offers of food, the weekly shower day at a bath house in Nørrebro meant everything, as he wrote to me in a message: *"The shower is massive. I mean, important point in my life, can't miss it*." For my informants, the shelters provided a

spatiotemporal scaffolding for their everyday, with time slots and physical places structuring their days and weeks.

In some cases, the institutional landscape of the city determined the entire daily rhythm. Erik, a middle-aged Danish man who I met at a day-time café, stays at a homeless shelter in Sydhavn, where he has a permanent room, accessible to him from 6 pm to 7 am. He then walks over to the café, where he can get breakfast and stay till 11 pm. Depending on the weather, he strolls through Copenhagen for a couple of hours or goes directly to a library. "*2 hours to read the newspaper, you know, stay up to date"* (Erik; quote from own field notes). Maybe he will walk around some more, maybe use one of the other day-time shelters. Come evening, he returns to his shelter, and the day comes to a close. It was palpable that the base of his shelter gave him stability, calm. However much I wondered about his trajectory beyond his current routine, there was no doubt that the network of institutions for him provided a safety net affording at least partly the "ontological security" (Easthope, 2010) that homelessness undermines.

But Erik represents a group of the homeless that uses *herberger*, thus having access to more regularized support and a permanent sleeping place. Over the course of my fieldwork, only two of my informants living rough gravitated towards a placement at a *herberg*, precisely because they longed for greater stability.

Most of the people I talked to did not have access to or actively avoided this kind of shelter, for various reasons, many of which will feature along the way. What they did use were emergency night-time shelters (*nødovernatning*), which offered ad hoc help rather than permanent solutions. Being sought out at the behest of users, the role these shelters played for my informants was quite individual.

5.2.2 Emergency Shelters: Between Fear, Rest, and Last Resort

Whereas a shelter can take up an entirely functional role with regard to most practical needs of life, this is different when it comes to sleep. A basic necessity of life, it also constitutes a state of high vulnerability, putting a person at risk to outward intrusion, stealing, and violence – an issue that has been shown to be especially acute for rough sleepers (Sutton-Hamilton & Sanders, 2023). Unsurprisingly, the issue of sleep and especially a place to sleep was a constant cause for concern for many of my informants. For those dependent on emergency night shelters, the spatiotemporal logic of these places shaped the planning and rhythm of my informants.

5.2.2.1 A Place of Recovery / A Place of Fear

An alcoholic for years, Paul said that *"I quit it from one day to the other. 'Cause the body didn't want to keep it in. It all came out"* (Paul). A social worker from a local charity organized him a bed at a rehab place, so he would be cared for under his detox. But as soon as had recovered from the abstinences, he moved on again.

> *It's actually a good place. Just too crammed. So then I, when I was doing better, I said, "I rather sleep outside. I'm doing fine. […] And it's getting too much here." 'Cause the people aren't just physically ill. Also mentally. Oh well, almost all of us have something. Us homeless. All a bit damaged. But some more, some less.*

The feeling of it *"getting too much in here"* was expressed by several of my informants, who appreciated the possibility for rest but found it hard to cope with shelter conditions. Most of my informants told me how they felt on edge, always alert for the possibility of stealing, of a verbal conflict, of violence breaking out. Though he said to sleep *"with one eye open"*, Cracker had got his credit card stolen in a shelter, prompting him to avoid night shelters at all costs.

For Felix, emergency shelters had become a *place of fear* (Fahnøe, 2018), as he felt uncomfortable with other users and harassed by staff. He had received numerous bans and was visibly riled up about it, his sense of injustice so great that he chose to sleep rough in precarious conditions, finding isolated spots on the beach to spend the night. This only aggravated his situation.

> *He says he tries to find spots where he can be as sure as possible that no one walks by, who might get bad ideas. Constantly fearing the worst, someone out there to get him, he has a hard time sleeping. As he said multiple times, "I'm scared for my life." Not to mention the cold: "It's cold, it's too wet actually to sleep outside"* (field notes)

Felix was not doing well with the situation, being increasingly worn out by the stresses of sleeping rough. In the end, staff at a shelter organized a place at a *herberg* for him. On the train on our way over there, he visibly relaxed. He told me that the prospect of knowing where to sleep, knowing that meals were provided for, knowing that he would not need to worry about his safety for a couple of days, that all of this came as a big relief. He did not know how long he would be allowed to stay beyond this weekend. But for the moment, he had a break.

None of my informants made use of emergency night shelters continuously. At some point, they would go over to another solution: roughing it somewhere in town, setting up camp outside of town, or finding a permanent placement in a *herberg*. But occasionally, there simply was no other way.

5.2.2.2 A Place of Last Resort

One place, an emergency night shelter that unlike most night shelters guaranteed a sleeping spot, my informants unanimously spoke of as a place of last resort. Several had personal items stolen from them there, a couple experienced violence, and all spoke about it as some version of "*completely out of control",* as Cracker put it – mainly due to alcohol and drug abuse. And yet, some nights it might be between that and sleeping rough. Wolfgang describes a night, where he did not get a spot at another night-time shelter, which uses lottery draws, when there are more people than beds.

*W: Once I was thrown out of the church, lost the lottery. And then I went on a forced march. From *** along that long street – do you know ***?*
B: Yeah, that's super far out.
W: Pretty far out, yeah. You walk a good hour, 90 minutes.

A single wrong number could make the difference between a night's shelter and *"roughing it"*. This essential insecurity kept many of my informants from relying on night shelters. Paul described the disquiet from not knowing whether you will have a roof over your head:

When it's 10 o'clock in the evening, and you don't know whether you can come in or not – if it's lottery, right, it's sheer luck that your number comes or not – that's exhausting. 'Cause then you always have to plan for sleeping outside, like you also have to be equipped for it.

I had myself witnessed the kind of tense expectations that filled the air in front of a night shelter around opening time. As my field notes document, it was a volatile atmosphere. Upon arrival, it had seemed like a rambunctious meeting of festival goers, with people shouting, laughing, cracking jokes. But,

As each person gets a number, written on the back of their hand, the mood shifts. Some of the guys get noticeably more tense. Many of them crowd close to the door, which David the volunteer is filling out as a very literal gatekeeper to the light and warmth of the church. Several people seem unsure of whether they can get a sleeping spot, while others are calm from the very moment the volunteers start with number 1 – apparently a clear indicator that there won't be any lottery, but simply a chronological letting-in of visitors. The queue moves painfully slowly, as each person is shown to their sleeping spot, and many in the crowd get restless. A guy sitting in a wheelchair is rolled up to the door by two of his friends, ignoring David's repeated requests to wait, that it's not their turn, and that they should go around to the side entrance with a ramp. At last they oblige, the guy in the wheelchair evidently thinking very little of it. The situation is progressing rather calmly, until there are 4 people left, none of which have a number, as they hadn't shown up before 10 pm. David explains that the place is at full capacity and that they simply showed up too late. One guys just turns away rather apathetically. Another guy makes a theatrical effort to get a sleeping bag from the place, all the while always on the verge of pushing himself over the threshold of the main door. Lastly there is a couple, the man pointing at the woman's leg and saying impatiently "She operation. Need to go to hospital!" When he finds out that this does not change the situation, he becomes indignant, only cooling slightly down when David assures him to check again if there is anything they can do for her. (field notes)

There was not. And it was unclear how the night was going to progress for the two. Where to turn to now? They might check another night shelter, hoping for an unclaimed spot that would be granted despite their late arrival. Or they might have to rough it, with seemingly no equipment for it on such a cold winter night.

The above instances showcase the limits of spatiotemporal stability afforded by the shelter infrastructure. Being overly reliant on their help could backfire, as the collection points that homeless people built their routines around had a capacity limit. The promise of a synchronized rhythm between shelter and homeless could easily collapse, leaving in its stead an *arrhythmia* that could create the uncomfortable experience of being fundamentally out of place. Without the alignment with the shelter's spatiotemporal order and thus the spatial 'containment' of the homeless, suddenly their presence in public space presents a transgression, with no appropriate place left for their intention to sleep the night (Cresswell, 1996).

As Paul mentioned: you always have to be prepared. Which of course is complicated when living in homelessness, where access to gear is limited, where daily struggles can make planning ahead difficult. Both Wolfgang and Luca told me of nights, where they tried to get through the hours almost by sheer force of will. They would spend much of the night pacing the city, every now and then trying to 'steal' some rest in more regulated spaces, where they were at the mercy of local security staff. Wolfgang describes the scenario when trying to find shelter in a metro station:

> *Yes, at the Runddel you can lie down, there's also always one guy lying there in his sleeping bag. But when the metro starts operating again, staff comes by. 'Cause everything is under video surveillance. Und the guard always says, "5 minutes, then you have to be out of here."*

As the metro is in service all night without pause, operating merely with larger intervals in-between trains, this respite could not have lasted longer than 12 minutes. In what Smith and Hall called the "24-hour-city" (2018), there is no moment of inactivity: "In a city centre geared up for smooth and easy pedestrian circulation the problem for the street homeless is not so much that they have nowhere to go, but, rather, they have nowhere to stop, at least not for long" (Smith and Hall, 2018: 106). With varying knowledge of the city's interstitial spaces, most of my informants were able to find ad hoc spaces, where they could wager to rest. But they navigated a shifting terrain, where the conditions for staying around could change at a whim.

As we will see, my informants chose widely differing strategies to deal with this fundamental ontological insecurity. In section 5.3, I will describe the spatiotemporal process of 'arrival' into homelessness, from difficult beginnings to the establishment of a new normal. In section 5.4, I will explore the potentials and limits for home in the creation of rhythms and routines. In section 5.5, I will investigate the volatile living conditions of life on the streets, discussing how some of my informants find freedom through adaptability and possibly even home through constant movement. Lastly, in section 5.6, I will look into spatially rooted efforts at homemaking and the contestations over territory in public space.

5.3 Arriving in Homelessness: Adjusting, Beating One's Way and Creating a new "normal"

Early on, my informants made it clear to me that navigating homelessness was decidedly a spatio-*temporal* process. Learning the ins and outs of surviving on the streets simply took time. In our conversation, Asger reflected on the beginnings as homeless:

> *The first two years were just shit. The first year you had to learn, what do you need? How much clothing do you need to wear? Should it be warm? Should it be thick? What kind of sleeping bag do you need? How many blankets? Ahh now it got wet, so how do I do with some groundsheets? What do I do with the dog's clothes? It was one big mess the first year, 'cause you had to learn, what the hell you needed on the streets, if you wanted to stay here.*

The detailed considerations necessary to survival on the streets make it plain, how a life in homelessness puts a completely different set of requirements to a person. Few experiences from before were useful to get by as a rough sleeper, making the process of navigating homelessness a daunting exercise, with a steep learning curve. Paul, too, shares the experience of simply being overwhelmed when newly homeless:

> *At first, you don't know what to do with yourself. And then… Then I… Back then there wasn't much with bottles either, at least I can't recall. It wasn't like that. So I went stealing. [laughs slightly embarrassed] Or something like that. I just went beating my way somehow.*

The beginnings of homelessness constitute a constant improvisation, and both Paul and Asger describe how they learned the hard way, going by trial and error. Trying their way through a flurry of makeshift strategies that prove unsustainable, they then slowly inch themselves closer to a stabilized position, from which they can navigate more actively.

Over time, their way of living had become so normalized to them that they found it hard to imagine anything else. And it had also changed them in ways that made them less compatible with other living arrangements.

Throughout the years, Asger has tried a wide array of places, sleeping in camping trailers, self-built shelters, and tents, but also more regularized places like a vacation house or a *skæv bolig*, a small apartment for people with social problems. But as he says, *"I've always come back here."* Asking him what the reason for that might be, he reflects,

> *I don't like to live indoors. Not anymore, in any case. And then… it's the people here. Even though I can be like, "Gee, they take up so much space". There's a lot of people*

that pass by every day. But then I also miss them. I miss that kind of turmoil that is around. My nurse puts it nicely: I find calm in the noise.

Asger's life in homelessness has shifted his criteria for calm and comfort, in some ways inverting it from the conventional idea, where it is the seclusion from outside noise and intrusion that creates calm. Sharing a similar inversion of common standards of comfort, Paul reflects on the transition he has undergone:

I've also become a maverick, a lone wolf. Like a proper one. I couldn't imagine anymore to live in a shared flat, either, together with other people. My own, small room, like a prison cell. That I could imagine. That would be enough. A little dump. [laughs] With a shower, and a little bathroom. And then keys, so you can lock it. Yeah, that I could see for myself.

Tellingly, Paul's version of a home space is entirely functional. As he imagines the possibility of a space of his own, his considerations are practical, focused on how such a place could more conveniently cover some of his daily needs: a place to sleep, a place to wash, a place to be safe. But it is a caricature, too, the ironic reconfiguration of home as a *"dump"*. His laughter shows that he thinks it absurd, and as Paul says himself about a more traditional version of home,

I don't miss it, either. Strangely enough. Some people miss this kind of normal life. I don't. When you ask me – and someone did the other day, this volunteer. She asked: "What do you miss the most?" And I said: "Actually nothing." [laughs] That surprised her.

The divide between a *"normal life"* and his way of living in homelessness appears time and again. Diffuse as this *"normal"* might be, it is obvious that others, like the volunteer, locate him apart from it and presume a loss in this gap.

This was a common trope in many of the conversations: people shared their experience of feeling and being seen as outside the norm. Having moved away from what for them and others were the parameters of a normal life – a flat, a job, a regular income –, they found themselves someplace else. For Paul at least, the condition of homelessness was not a "*blow of fate*", but rather a state of life:

It's a problem I think for many that aren't homeless voluntarily. For those it's really a blow of fate. For me, it's not a blow of fate. I wanted to live like this. I want to live like this. Until the end. For me, it's normal.

Rather than seeing his life in the context of lack, Paul is constructing his homelessness as a new normal. However, it is important not to romanticize this process, either. The reasons for having to

strive for a new normal to begin with are often found in experiences of suffering and exclusion. Struck by Paul's positive framing of his homelessness, I shared my impression:

> *B: You seem to have found your own freedom in this way of life.*
>
> *P: Well, to begin with I rather… I mean, I did say that I left of my own accord, but really it wasn't so voluntary. I felt a bit edged out, by the Verhältnisse*. They kind of pushed… I let myself be pushed out, because I didn't want to live like that.*
>
> (*most closely approximated by *social conditions,* used in a generalized fashion to refer to the state of society and its norms)

Setting it in the widest possible context, Paul articulates the position of a misfit that rubs against conventional life forms. What he perceived as the "normal" of society was not only undesirable but also unattainable. Asger's reflections on the reasons for homelessness resonate with this experience:

> *There's a reason why you sit down here to begin with. There has to be something somewhere in your life that's gone amiss or that affects you in some way. 'Cause it sure isn't the majority of hr. og fru Danmark* out there that says, "Alright then, now I take a blanket and an air mattress, and you all can kiss my ass! Now I'll sit down here." And there you've been sitting for 10 years, André… I mean, that's just not normal thinking. […] I usually say that you're not normal, when you do something like that. It just isn't. Maybe you need a time, where you say, "I need to unplug, I need some air, I lie down by Bagsværd and find myself a tent and have a good time." But that sure isn't what I've down, right? I've turned it into a lifestyle.*
>
> (*literally *Mr. and Mrs. Denmark*, an expression to refer to the average, typical Danish people)

Constantly contrasting the homeless life with the idea of normal, Asger outlines a position on the margins. Making virtue of necessity, he has turned his marginalized position into a "*lifestyle"*. Like Paul, he gives marked contours to the state of homelessness, thus constructing it as a *new normal*. Troubled and strained though their journey into and through homelessness might be, both in a spatial, a temporal and a normative sense Paul and Asger can be seen to 'arrive' into homelessness.

It might be unsurprising that their arrival is always only a temporary one, fraught with the myriad challenges of everyday life in homelessness.

Paul and Asger met these challenges in markedly different ways, with Asger having 'his' spot in the city and going through remarkably similar days, while Paul switched up his sleeping spot almost constantly and lived with a very loose daily structure. As we will see, from their and my other informants' practices emerge two different ways of creating home within homelessness. I will return

to Paul further down in section 5.5, when I discuss the risks and the freedom inherent in an ad hoc navigation of homelessness. And I will continue to unfold Asger's spatiotemporal strategies in section 5.6. For now, I will explore the case of Alfred, in order to further investigate the potential for home in the creation and practice of routines.

5.4 Navigating Time: From Linear to Cyclical and Beyond

5.4.1 Stability in Sameness: Finding Home in Rhythm and Routines

For the past 13 years, Alfred has had the same camping spot in a park outside of town, where come what may, every evening he sets up his tent when it gets dark and packs his stuff together in the morning.

> *I get up around 5, half past 5 in the morning. And then I pack up my stuff. Afterwards, I walk to the train. That takes around 20 minutes from ***. And then I take the train till Nørreport. Buy a cup of coffee. Then I go down and see, if Asger has gotten up yet, or if he sits at the bench already. And then… Then we sit and chat for a couple hours. At least till 8 am, when they open here [at the library]. And then Asger goes to the park. And I go here. That's kind of… That's how it goes almost every day, right?*

Of all my informants, Alfred was the only one I always encountered at the same place. Every time without fail, he would sit at his fixed spot, usually immersed in a documentary or a book. His traveler's backpack with all his belongings leaning against the chair and his daily supplies spread over the table, he spent most of his waking hours there, only venturing out for the occasional cigarette break. Alfred had created an incredibly reliable rhythm for himself that turned his everyday into a cyclical reiteration of itself, day by day.

This had noticeably removed him from the linear trajectory of time. As van Doorn (2010) has shown, it is a common tendency for homeless people that their perception of time increasingly moves from the dominant linear progression to a more cyclical understanding. Lacking events and structures that mark the passing of time, chronologies make way for recurrences and can create a feeling of suspension in homeless individuals (van Doorn, 2010).

At one point in our interview, he expresses the wish to find a flat and a work, *"because I am bored out of my mind".* But he has only recently started to pursue those things, so I ask him,

> *B: But what is the reason then that so much time has passed? 13 years sure is a long time, no?*
>
> *A: Ah, but it is a long time. It really is. But one day goes after the other, right? And suddenly, a year has gone by.*

Alfred's description attests to a strange doubleness of time, which seems to stretch almost infinitely in the present, while at the same time, in retrospect, having passed at the blink of an eye. What becomes apparent in Alfred's case is that survival in homelessness is not merely about navigating the city spatially, but that there is a decidedly temporal element to it. Alfred had created a routine for himself that afforded him considerable predictability and security, his everyday rhythm a safe space, from which to steer through the shifting geographies of homelessness. In line with Schneider's (2022) empirical findings among rough sleepers, here home manifests as routines, as these become "the texture that weave the fabric of home" (Schneider, 2022: 243). Home was thus not merely a spatial construct for Alfred, but rather a spatiotemporal entity that emerged from the everyday reiteration of practices in certain spaces at certain times.

5.4.2 No More Groundhog Day: Switching it Up and Looking Ahead

The strangeness of time passing in elusive ways was an experience that came up with other informants, too. Cracker described the feeling of places and events blurring together into an unintelligible whirl, where chronology was difficult to establish.

> *It's so hard to remember everything, actually. Because I stayed a lot, the first year I stayed in hospitals and stuff. Then things got a bit hairy. And I stayed proper rough. But it was over the summer that I was sleeping out in the woods. And then I thought, "Oh, this is crazy." And then I found out about ***. And obviously, ***. Stayed there. But then there was a lottery. And then I... I don't know, roughed it. I was just sleeping all over the place. And... Yeah. Anyway, the camping thing started after staying at that shithole. Yeah, it's hard to bloody remember. It's hard to... you know.*

Thinking back to a time in his life where it was all chaos and change, the texture of time seemed to be constantly slipping out of reach for Cracker. For the past 2 years, he had set up camp outside of town, and the fixed sleeping spot had afforded some stability: "*A steady place to stay. And safe. That's the main thing.*" Knowing where to start and end his day was a relief to Cracker, but the prospect of the kind of boredom that Alfred described, acted as a strong deterrent against sameness.

> *J: I'll say this, there's never a dull moment, you know.*
>
> *B: No, you don't get bored?*
>
> *J: No. No, no, never. Frustrated. Not bored. Never get bored. […] I don't sit around. If I did, I'd go crazy. If I thought too much about my situation, you know, it wouldn't be good.* (Cracker, 12:00 - 12:20)

Getting by largely without the use of shelters, neither Alfred nor Cracker had any given structuring elements in their everyday. But instead of the maximum recurrence that Alfred had established, Cracker employed a diametrically opposed tactic in the face of temporal openness: he changed things up constantly. For, "*Otherwise it's just like Groundhog Day. Same day in and out.*"

Something to avoid for Cracker, this was already a reality for Alfred. And while he was tired of the sameness of his days, this was at the same time the foundation for his everyday life. His daily routine had virtually become one with the opening hours of the main library, and over the years, he had also read a considerable part of its stock. Once, during a conversation, he motioned behind us towards a section filled with alphabetically ordered biographies: *"I've pretty much read all of them."* The indiscriminate selection of literature was striking to me, given that he spent so much time on it. But this reflected a general disposition in Alfred, who exhibited a forbearance that bordered on indifference. It took me a while to understand that he was not indifferent about his situation, far from it.

Around 3 years back, an outreach worker had started checking up on him regularly. At the time virtually the only recurring social contact to the outside world, over time this relation had become an important part of his life. It had also opened the possibility of signing Alfred up for an apartment, a thought that had recently grown on him. When I ask him about it, he expresses a longing for something *"normal"*.

> *B: What's the reason that you'd now like to [apply for an apartmemt]?*
>
> *A: Ah, you grow tired of it. Also because you just want to have another, a more normal everyday life than this one. 'Cause it's not normal, is it? It just isn't.*

But this new course also upsets the spatiotemporal routines Alfred has established to navigate the city of Copenhagen as a homeless person. Being a person without additional vulnerabilities, he can expect to wait for an apartment for 2 to 3 years. For now then, nothing changes. But his outlook has changed, and as he told me, *"Now I really can't be bothered anymore"*. So when I met him, he was trying to strike a difficult balance between creating new prospects for himself, while having to maintain his routines that were starting to fit less and less by the day. On the surface, he waved it off, saying that after this long a time, 2 or 3 more years would hardly make a difference. But in the commitment to a new future, there lay also an acknowledgement of being dissatisfied in the present. The stoic sameness of the present that had served him well over the years had received cracks, and through the openings broke a restlessness, palpable in his longing for "normalcy": first an apartment, then a job.

Cracker, too, had his eyes on the future. Experiencing himself as stuck in Copenhagen and his present conditions, he put all his hopes and energies on getting to South Africa, where had worked for 4 years and was guaranteed a work permit again.

> *In the end, well, when I've got everything sorted out and the money, you know, that I've got coming in and the bank shit sorted out, I'm definitely going to Cape Town.*

Manifest in the future as a place of longing, it gave him a sense of direction in the present but also increased his discomfort with his current conditions. The realization of his ambition rested on several conditionalities, over which he had limited to no control. Trying with all his might to regain access to his English bank account, he was at the same time awaiting an inheritance from his grandmother – *"money coming in"*, but as he said, it might be months.

Their inner strife between a future longed for but not just yet within reach illustrated their ambiguous position in time, their rhythmicity fraught with tensions. While Alfred had established an almost complete *isorhythmia* with the spatiotemporal structure of the library, he remained in a fundamental *arrhythmia* towards the rhythms of the city that he perceived as meaningful: the reliable recurrences of work and the spatiotemporal stability of an apartment. Cracker was in a state of constant *polyrhythmia*, where different temporal strands were running parallel, with him going in and out of various spatiotemporal trajectories – always with the hope of spatiotemporal resolution in the form of his aspired future life in Cape Town.

What transpired in their navigation of homelessness was very much the opposite directionality found with Asger and Paul. Where the latter had deliberately moved away from normalcy, Alfred and Cracker were aspiring 'back' to what they saw as an existence more in sync with the dominant spatiotemporal rhythms of everyday life.

For Cracker and Alfred, the spatiotemporal navigation of the geographies of homelessness was an incremental process, making various deliberations along the way. Their process of change stretched over a long time, from announcing its possibility to being considered to embracing it and finally to waiting for its actualization. In many ways, this represented an untypical dynamic for my informants, who, moving outside of predictably recurring patterns, often found themselves exposed to sudden unannounced changes. I will explore my informants' navigation of their rapidly shifting surroundings in the next section.

5.5 No Planning, all adapting: the Freedom of Hazarding the Consequences

Some of the people I talked to were virtually always on the move. When I encountered them, they were noticeably in a temporary state, always eyeing other options. When they told me of their living arrangements, a whirl of places and people unfolded, as their sleeping spots, their daily routines, and their current outlook on things shifted at an incredibly fast pace.

5.5.1 Rolling with the Punches: Becoming a *Lebenskünstler* of the streets

The intense adaptability necessary for this unsteady way of life becomes apparent in Paul's account of a messy night at his fallback option for sleeping, underneath the canopy of the local church:

> *When it starts raining at night – like a lot, because a little rain doesn't matter, but the wind pushes the rain inwards and then I was really wet once. I got two sleeping bags, when it's this cold, right? Both drenched. And I had also eaten something bad and had stomach cramps. The whole night I could hardly sleep. […] But I got the "Arbejdernes" bank here, so I lay down there to sleep. They have these special rooms that I locked and then I dried my sleeping bags there and just slept there. […] They're like handicap toilets. And they got several of those, so when one is locked, it doesn't attract attention, they can just use the others. And it's relatively warm there, too.*

These kinds of layered problems were a common occurrence among my informants. Malte described a similarly chaotic night to me, where he had miscalculated and chosen the wrong spot to lie down. His usual sleeping spot under a bridge taken, he spots a container,

> *And I think, "I bloody sleep up there." You can't see up there. And it's nicely peaceful. 'Cause you have to get up some stairs onto a container. But I shouldn't have done that. God dammit, that wind stung me right in the neck. I am bloody frozen. That's when I found that toilet over there. Put groundsheet and blanket and stuff like that. Not the first time.*

The experiences by Wolfgang earlier on speak a similar story. In their bid to maintain a high degree of autonomy, many of my informants hazard the consequences. While this made them vulnerable to external disturbances in the day-to-day grind, they expressed feeling a great deal of personal freedom in their way of life. Paul sets up a direct comparison of his experience of homelessness with what he calls "*a normal life"*:

> *Of course it's also a difficult – like it's not easy, when you're homeless. But it's not easy either, when you live normal. I mean, I think you have more problems, when you live the normal life. Even just financially, right? You need money for this, that, that, that, that. How much you have to pay everywhere, no? I don't have those worries. That's worth, I mean, to me that's worth a lot. I don't have to pay rent every month or cover any other costs. Actually I think, maybe life as a homeless is even easier than as an ordinary mortal.*

It is important to stay aware of the role this kind of reasoning also plays as a narrative construction that creates self-assurance. Paul is noticeably thinking aloud, finding a tentative answer to his own question, as he speaks. But the experience of freedom is an important part of the story. At another point in the interview Paul says that he takes life *"day by day"*: *"I don't plan anything."* Despite the insecurity of the unplanned life, he stresses that, *"I find my life less strenuous. Than that of the others. Who have to do the same every day. I can decide. If I don't feel like reading anymore, I just go outside, collect some bottles. Or do whatever else."*

Malte expresses a similar sentiment, when he elaborates on his experience as homeless, reflecting on the surprised reaction by a conversation partner when Malte told him that he was homeless, back when he had his camp in Aarhus:

> *I sleep in a tent. But I'm actually fine with it. I look after number one. What I like most right now is that I take care of myself. That's really important for myself that the decisions I take, it's me that takes them. For the first time in my life, I can say: I go this way, and not that way. […] No one in this world can tell me what to do. I like that. It's the first time in my life I feel this free.]*

When assessing these reflections by my informants, it is tempting to see them purely as a performance of autonomy, a construction of control within highly vulnerable life conditions that grant very little control over the course of life. While this is undeniably part of what is going on, the freedom that both Malte and Paul expressed was equally real to them. Constrained in their range of choices regarding many of the practicalities of life, they nonetheless retained a remarkable autonomy about their general position in the world.

What is more, being constantly on the move seemed an apt strategy when confronted with surroundings that were rapidly evolving in their own way. Recognizing long-term planning as futile in their life situation, they bothered very little with trajectories towards the future, instead focusing almost entirely on the current day. This required the kind of dynamic navigation that Vigh (2006, 2009) theorized. If the geographies of homelessness constitute the sea that my informants steer through, they find themselves steering from wave top to wave top. Planning for the next foreseeable stretch is essential, but beyond that it might well be futile, requiring instead an intense adaptability and constant readiness to roll with the punches. This kind of navigation required high alertness and constant adaptability, but it also equipped them with a remarkable resilience towards changes and sudden problems, as they were always already anticipating them.

This mode of being nevertheless gave rise to its own regularities. As Paul said, *"Even homelessness has its routines".* Only, Paul's and Malte's routines are not rooted in any spatiotemporal continuity. Rather, they constitute generalized behaviors and activities that they can return to time and again. No matter the location, they establish certain nodes of practices, around which they can structure their day. For Malte, this might be his morning visit at the local charity, the stay at his friend's café, and his routinized search for a sleeping spot at night, as he ticks off his go-to options. For Paul, collecting bottles, spending time at the library, and shelter routines to fulfill basic needs together make up a collection of tried and tested methods to get by. Paul mentions how people have called him a "*Lebenskünstler*", that is, a connoisseur of the art of living. Even though he waves this label off, saying "*I don't consider it an artform*", there is something to be said for people like Malte and Paul being, if not artists, then definitely experts at survival in dire circumstances.

In the end, their constant physical movement as well as their mental disposition to adapt did not only afford them a sense of freedom, but also its own, fragile way of belonging.

5.5.2 Fragile Homecoming: Finding Belonging in Movement

Finding comfort in chaos gave rise to a paradoxical sense of belonging. When asked whether he felt home anywhere, Malte replied: *"Not at all. I'm restless. I'm very restless. I don't know what I should do. I don't know, if I should go back to Aarhus, or if I should stay here in Copenhagen, or If should head to a whole 'nother place."* In a direct, spatial sense, Malte had no place to call his own. But this seemed to be more about the question which city to stay in, not so much about the condition of homelessness.

Having a place of his own was not without reach, as he received a considerable pension and could get access to a *herberg*, where he would receive help to find his own place. But this prospect held little appeal to him. Once, he had gotten a permanent bed in a shelter with his ex-wife, the only expense being the legally required contribution to the daily fare, around 100 kroner per day.

> *I got food every day. And a nice bed, and nice rooms with bathroom and everything. I wasn't lacking a damn thing. That lasted a month. But I'd like to be free from that: having expenses with anything at all.*

On the face of it, Malte received a lot of benefits from his placement: food, a bed, a bathroom. And it seemed perplexing that the "*expenses*" should be the breaking point, as they were significantly lower than what he told me his daily expenditures were currently on the streets. As almost all of my informants had said, and as he had said himself, "*being homeless is expensive*". But for Malte, it mattered a great deal, whether he had to hand over money to a place that would cater to his needs on their terms, or whether he was in charge of when, how much, and on what he would spend his money. This was a matter of independence and autonomy, which became even more obvious, when I asked him about the prospect of having his own apartment:

> *B: Do you think you're gonna keep being homeless? Or will you look for an apartment at some point?*
>
> *M: I'm not planning on it, in any case. I have no plans about getting an apartment.*
>
> *B: Why is that, actually?*
>
> *M: 'Cause I got used to this. […] It's hard. It's expensive. My body is being worn out. But fuck it. I'm myself. I'm under the radar.* (Malte, 43:30- 44:20)

Despite the hardship of being homeless, despite the toll this life was taking on his body, Malte preferred this way of life over a more conventional one. For here, it was him who called the shots, and he had no one to answer to, whether he did things one way or another. This autonomy became manifest in the diverse configuration of his everyday life. Over the course of our conversations and as

we walked through Nørrebro, it seemed to be exactly the constant movement, the manifold places, the dynamic structure of his days that grounded him.

Paul articulated a similarly complex notion of belonging. Asked about the question of home, he placed it somewhere between heaven and nowhere:

> *P: Home is heaven for me now. That could be home, but here I don't have any home. I don't feel at ease anywhere, either. That's why I live like I live. 'Cause I don't feel like I belong anywhere. I live somewhat on the sidelines. Like I said, betwixt and between.*
>
> *B: But is that okay?*
>
> *P: Now yes, previously no. No, really just since this year, funnily enough.*

At first glance, this sounds like a sad condition. Not belonging anywhere seems like a terrible fate. And certainly, it entails hardship, as his various experiences as homeless testify. As we talked, he seemed surprised himself that he did not mind much. But then he sets it into the context of recent changes: having stopped drinking, he is also no longer forced to steal and put himself at risk of bans and arrests. *"Maybe I needed some distance to Germany",* he suggests himself.

All the while he talked about this, Paul's tone was not one of despair or even sadness. The many times I met Paul, I only ever experienced him talking of his homelessness matter-of-factly, often with a smile on his face. As quoted before, to him homelessness was not a "*blow of fate*", but rather a state of life, the *new normal* outlined in section 5.3. While this undeniably was a position on the "sidelines", falling "betwixt and between" established categories, Malte and Paul nevertheless filled this marginal position with a range of practices and routines that had them occupy a position of autonomy and confidence. In this sense, homelessness can become a way to be in this world, affording its own sort of stability. Not by way of predictability and ontological security, but conversely, by way of a radical freedom and openness that constitute the underlying conditions of existence. For Malte and Paul, this dynamic foundation permitted a tentative yet tangible sense of home.

Maybe nowhere does this notion find expression better than in the preliminary end of my relation to Paul. Meeting him at the library in February, he was, rather suddenly, ready to leave.

> *Benjamin tells me that he's been good, steady. But he is ready to get back to Germany, too. He expresses some disappointment over the way shelters work out in Denmark. "They do this lottery thing, and it's just not right. I mean, the people that come here to work, or whatever you wanna call it. They take the spots of the others. The real homeless. Like me. I mean, I am actually homeless, I don't have anywhere to sleep, no place in another country I can just return to." Now he's just looking to get the money together and then off to Hamburg. He doesn't want to get back into the refund race either, when all the seasonal bottle collectors come from East Europe. and it starts to be*

a fight about the bottles. "It's a bit absurd really. But that's how it is, it becomes a struggle."

None of this was remarkably different from Paul's three previous years in Copenhagen, but he just had enough. Whatever else the place had going for him in terms of relations and wellbeing, it no longer mattered enough. Two things were striking in Paul's reasoning: one, he framed himself as *"actually homeless"*, delegitimizing the claim others, presumably 'less homeless' because having a house someplace else, have on a sleeping spot at the shelter. Articulating his identity as explicitly "*homeless"*, this illustrates how for him, homelessness was indeed a way to be in the world. Two, it was the sheer pace of change. His significant shift in outlook had happened over the course of 1 ½ months, and he was quick to take action, not hesitating in the slightest to disrupt his life and relocate again. Truly for Paul, a sense of home and belonging arose not from a place nor any spatiotemporal stability. Instead, it came from movement and change itself, from the constant embracing of the fundamental unpredictability of a life in homelessness.

For others, exactly the opposite was the case: they created a notion of home around a specific place, creating spatial continuity.

5.6 Taking up Public Residence: Between Homemaking and Evictability

There were two of my informants that lay claim to a specific spot on the streets, virtually in the middle of pedestrian traffic. Through their daily recurring use, for all intents and purposes, this place became theirs. As will become apparent, this sort of territorial claim gave rise to potentials for home, while at the same time increasing exposure to eviction.

5.6.1 A Web of Routines and Relations: Homemaking on the Streets

By the time that I met him in the fall of 2023, Asger had succeeded in establishing an unusually stable and regularized living situation for himself. He and his dog had access to the same space every day to spend both his waking and sleeping hours. He was not merely tolerated there, but treated as a neighbor, with the owners of the building allowing him use of their power outlets and city employees greeting him as they passed.

For Asger, it is all about creating relations to the people around him. He describes this process with the local 7/11:

So when you start to come to the same shop, then you start to get to know the staff and you start being a bit cheeky. "Ahh isn't it about time that us homeless get some discount?" So around 5-6 years ago, Jonas [the shop owner] goes, "Now I've bloody had it with your shit." So he made a card and printed and laminated it. And it said "VIP". So

I'd become the VIP customer, so whenever there would be new staff, I would just show it. Then they knew, what kind of discount they should enter.

Key to this approach is simply staying put. Asger called it his "*seniority*" of 10 years and counting, which had secured him discounts at virtually every place around. He called it establishing a "*stable customer base"*, which also included agreements with local offices that would notify him, when their bin for refundable bottles was filled, so he could pick them up and cash the deposit. Spinning a thin but intricate web of social relations, these sorts of arrangements firmly rooted him in the local area.

It was obvious that for Asger, this place was not just a spot of convenience, to crash at night and thus 'fix' the problem of sleep. Quite visibly, Asger had carved out a space conducive to home making: having his spot in an arcade, he was shielded from rain, his cargo bike blocking the wind, and he sat one wall removed from the constant flow of pedestrians. As he told me of his kids and grandkids visiting him, he spoke of them coming "*home*" to him.

I*t's been like this for many years, that the kids come here with their kids – as if it was my home. And that's also what it is, really. So, familywise, I'm just like everyone else. I just live outdoors.*

Beyond the wish to normalize his unusual way of life, Asger's framing of his spot as home was reflected in his everyday practices. As he walked me through the structure of his day, it became apparent that this place was his base, the start and end point to every day and to every endeavor.

B: *Would you mind taking me through an average day for you?*

*A: Ahh, they're boring, but sure, I can tell you. This morning, I got up at 5 am. Up and to the toilet. Over to 7/11 to get myself a coffee. Back here quarter past 5. Switch on the news on my phone. Wait till the clock turns 6. That's when the cleaning guy comes, the warden of ***. […] Then I'm over at ***[local square]. That was at quarter past 6 this morning. […] Then I waited for a guy, Alfred, I meet him every morning and drink coffee with him. […] Then we sit there till 8 am, quarter past. Then I go over in *** [local park] with him [points at his dog]. I do that every day. […] Today we were there till quarter to 10. […] Over to *** [shelter], to *** [social worker]. And from there I left around half past 11. I knew you would come at 2 pm, so I've been here since 1 o'clock.*

Asger had established set times and procedures for almost every aspect of his day, all revolving around his abode. Beyond a mere spatial construct, Asger enacted *home as routines* (Schneider, 2022). Homemaking thus manifested as a twofold spatiotemporal process. Following the linear progression of time, Asger managed to establish an increasing number of routines and relations. In turn, with each addition to his everyday ecology, the cyclical reiteration of his daily practices gained in complexity and robustness.

5.6.2 Stoic and Tenacious: Defying Eviction by Staying Put

Gabriel had his spot in front of a supermarket on a small street in Vesterbro, sitting in a notch by the entrance doors. Sleeping in a nearby church, he went to his spot early in the morning and stayed there all throughout the day, hardly moving about. To begin with, it seemed somewhat incredible to me that he could make do with this arrangement. Hardly protected from the weather conditions by only a narrow canopy, he sat on a plastic crate turned upside down, and was exposed all day long to a constant stream of passersby, supermarket shoppers and users of the fitness studio in the same building.

This impression was only enhanced, as I came by one day and found that he had been pushed aside, his former spot taken up by two massive flower racks. Every day for several years he had sat in his corner, where it would seem he did not bother anyone greatly. But unbeknownst to Gabriel, some people in the housing block had not liked the sight of him and pushed for a change. Some day in October then, two men, staff hired for the job, installed the flower racks, covering the entirety of the corner. This was a textbook example of *hostile design*, elements added to push away unwanted dwellers of the city (Jensen, 2022).

Gabriel now had to squeeze in by one of the doors, but if the goal was to remove him from the spot, the opposite was the case: not only did he stay, but he was now forced to create an actual inconvenience.

To my surprise, Gabriel took it all quite lightly; yes, of course, it was stupid, and he wondered who was behind it. But as far as he was concerned, he could still be there, so really it did not matter that much.

> *B: How did it change your everyday?*
>
> *G: I don't know. No, no, it changed nothing. The people come here and tell me: "No, this no is good here."*

It was striking to me that the open hostility of this measure did not seem to make him feel unwelcome. Neither did he stick around out of spite. It was more with a stoic endurance that he stayed. Continuity of residence was key: knowing your way around, knowing where to get what, and most importantly, knowing the people, created stability and foreseeability. Furthermore, the small everyday relations to employees and neighbors created visibility as a person, a human being.

As he told me, *"Here, I have everything."* And truly, he had established his own little ecology of living. He had his acquaintances and friendly neighbors that he conversed with, had his phone and a power bank, was always stacked up on supplies. Alcohol definitely played a role, as he was actively drinking. But his everyday was also full of small, informal, ritualized arrangements.

> *He tells me how the students from the school just across the street talk to him when they get snacks at the supermarket. "They always greet me. And then we speak some Spanish. You know, they practice, ask me what this or that is called in Spanish." His face lights up when he relates this little daily encounter, a friendly meeting from person to person, a chance for him to pass on some knowledge. Then he adds with a grin, "They often ask me for a cigarette. And well, of course I can't just give them one, it doesn't look right. Anybody sees that, I'm gonna get in trouble. So what I do is I go inside and drop a cigarette by the entrance. Then they can go, pick it up, and go out to the back to smoke it. They share it, one cigarette for 4, 5 kids. Couple of drafts each, then it's done."(Gabriel, field notes)*

It was tempting to dub Gabriel a sort of *homeless local*, except that in his demeanor and way of occupying the space, making it his spot, he did not seem homeless. Instead, he had created a home – makeshift and always subject to external disturbances, but a home all the same. The contestations of his 'residence' were just as ritualized as his other interactions. Gabriel told me of his interaction with the local police:

> *G: Always, always, always when he is working, he bothers me.[…]*
>
> *B: Here, passing by?*
>
> *G: Yes. "Go from here. Take everything from here and go over there."*
>
> *B: Every time?*
>
> *G: Every time, when he comes, yes. I say, "Well, I'm very sorry, sir. But you, in five minutes you leave here. I'm going to come back."*

This seemed little more than a staged performance to uphold appearances. Technically, of course, Gabriel was not allowed to stay at his spot, especially now that he was forced to block one of the doors. But over the course of the years, this had manifested as *his* spot, and it seemed as durable to remove him as it would to remove anybody from their respective home. However, also this performance, unfolding once, sometimes twice a week, became part of the rhythmicity of Gabriel's place – and created irritation when left out.

> *He tells me that the police no longer pick him off the streets, as it's new staff, and shrugging his shoulders he says, "Now, they don't even greet me", and it sounds almost like he laments no longer having that contact. (Gabriel, field notes)*

Seeming almost hurt in his pride, Gabriel's reaction shows how much his feeling of belonging was tied up to the continuity of his local spatiotemporal routines, almost regardless of whether they were beneficial to him or not in a more immediate way. Just like his more amiable relations, the policeman's recurring 'mock' bans constituted an acknowledgement of Gabriel's presence there, ironically consolidating his claim to the space. Of course, he was still vulnerable to eviction: a hostile police officer or security guard and the installation of further hostile design was always possible and could undo his spot in an instant. But for the time I knew him, instead of illustrating his evictability, the hostile measures against Gabriel ended up attesting to his spatiotemporal resilience. More generally, it pointed to the potential for homeless people to lay claim to public space and preserve that claim against outward pressures.

5.6.3 Territorial Contestations: The Claim to a Place

Both Gabriel and Asger had shaped a wide array of spatiotemporal routines that embedded them in their local surroundings in a lasting way. However, the *home as routines* that manifested from their everyday practices relied on constant reiteration, as the spatial foundation for this home was fragile and transient. As Smith and Hall's (2018) pointed out in their study of shifting territories in urban public space: any claim on a place is tentative and prone to contestation. Once established, territories are not just a stable given; rather, "re-marking is still required. An unpatrolled, unmarked territory lapses as such" (Smith and Hall, 2018: 387). In Gabriel's case, this could be observed in real time: as soon as he was away from his spot for a day or two, someone else took it over. Trying to prevent anybody from challenging his claim, he occupied his spot already in the early morning hours.

Asger, widely recognized in the neighborhood as the arcade resident, had a stronger claim on his spot: him leaving for part of the day or even several days in a row in no way affected his position. But even he was not immune to territorial contestation, which in his case manifested in a drastic and unexpected fashion.

> *So the 30th October 2018, suddenly two paddy wagons turned up, you know, and we lay here and slept. And there lay someone all the way at the other end. […] So they come and say that we have been issued a zone ban. We weren't allowed to lie and sleep here. And they gave us 3 months, where I was not allowed to be in the Copenhagen municipality. Plus, a fee of 1000 kroner. That's right, I got thrown out of the entire Copenhagen municipality.*

The police had deemed his sleeping arrangement an infringement of the anti-camping law, as he lay there with a friend and his things, as well as a group of other homeless people some ways down the arcade. In combination, the setting was considered a "camp creating insecurity" (see chapter 4, Context),

By the time that I met him in 2023, Asger had long returned to his old spot in inner city, having fought and won a lawsuit against the order with the help of local street lawyers. But as he said,

> *Those 3 months I lost, both physically and mentally... Especially mentally, it took a big toll on me. I had been in this area for 7, 8 years and was just yanked from the streets. I did not know anything but Copenhagen.*

In one fell swoop, the zone ban had upended Asger's entire living arrangement. The conditions of his homelessness had radically changed and required him to navigate in new, uncomfortable ways. Usually not venturing further than a bike ride away from his spot, suddenly he was not supposed to even come near it. He was allowed to enter the municipality of Copenhagen only for a specific purpose, some finite, pre-defined amount of time it takes to run an errand. Entering on the precondition of exiting, only passing through.

> *B: So where did you go?*
>
> *A: I was here [inner city] almost all the time. I had a camper out in ***, in an industrial area. So I was out there, maybe for a week. Then I was here. I didn't sleep here. But I was here a lot of hours every day. And hid behind my buddy, who sold Hus Forbi by the supermarket. […] I wasn't allowed to be here. But I was here pretty much every day.*

His account makes clear the immense importance his familiar surroundings held for Asger. He was going to return, even if it meant putting himself at risk of further sanctions. Just as with Gabriel, this shows the futility of repressive action against the presence of homelessness in public space, as that presence is bound up with notions of home and belonging that are not easily undone. Bans did not keep them away; instead, they returned on more precarious terms.

In Asger's case, the injustice of it all ate at him, and he was not just going to sit there and acquiesce in the situation.

> *I simply wasn't gonna accept that I had been thrown out. And I simply wasn't gonna accept that I got a fine for sleeping on the streets. "But it was creating insecurity*." To which I say, "Is it creating insecurity to lie and sleep? Have I snored too loudly in my sleep, so people got scared?" I mean, really. So then they called it a camp, 'cause all of them down there. That's sure as hell not a camp! So then they took measurements with architects and my lawyers. They called it a camp because it was under one roof. So I said, "Come on, that is 10 meters!" It turned out to be 10 meters and 40 cm, so I eye-balled that pretty good. So then we were acquitted, that it was not a camp.*
>
> (*in Danish *utryghedsskabende*, with *utryghed* referring to a general sense of insecurity and discomfort, a state of unease)

This was a tenacious and quite literal struggle over the contours and limits of public space. Where usually the dynamic of navigation for my informants was to anticipate oncoming challenges or react to external changes, this was a direct confrontation and negotiation of the conditions for homelessness. The permissibility of home boiled down to a question of measurements.

After he won the lawsuit and could return to his spot, things were seemingly back to normal. But as he said to me, *"It took a long time to move on. It still nags me sometimes. The time before the zone ban was different from the time that came after."* There is a sense of rupture in his account of the experience. At some point in our conversation, Asger misspeaks, and his slip of the tongue illustrates what was at stake back then. Addressing the secretary of justice, who he holds responsible for being removed from his spot in inner city, he asks rhetorically, *How do you feel about throwing me out on the streets?*" And he quickly corrects himself, *"Or I mean, throw me* off *the streets?*"

The idiom to throw someone on the streets is a well-worn phrase and illustrates that societally, we consider this an insult and a humiliation. This rests on a tacit assumption that the streets are a place of no protection, of discomfort and continual hardship. But what if you have wrested a daily life from these harsh conditions, have created some semblance of home, and now that the streets are your home, you are sent away even from there? What place else can you turn to?

Asger's experience makes painfully clear, how extremely vulnerable homeless people are. No living situation on the streets, however stable it may seem for the moment, can ultimately undo the underlying condition of *evictability*. For Asger, the removal in 2018 was an unexpected blow that shook him in his core. The formerly unquestioned assumption of being safe at his home was shattered, leaving in its stead a slight but ever-present insecurity. For, as he said, almost in passing, "*The police can still kick me out. If people say that it's creating insecurity."*

5.6.4 Between Reaching the Limits and Seizing Opportunities: Spatiotemporal Navigation into New Terrains

Over time, the limits of navigating homelessness became visible in another way for Asger. At our meeting in October, he had framed his life on the streets as a well-established *"lifestyle"* that he was planning to uphold for the foreseeable future. A social worker had even told me that he often said to her that he was sure to die on the streets, simply because that is where he would stay till the end. But when I came to say hi to him at his usual spot at the end of January, he was no longer there.

As Alfred told me, over the course of the last months, Asger's health had worsened. Already weakened by COPD and nerve damage in his legs, he had had no longer been able to wear off the winter cold. This, according to Alfred, was the *"sign of something else going on",* seeing as Asger had weathered more than 10 winters in the outdoors. This winter was different, for no particular reason other than the cumulative wear and tear of a tough life with years of drug abuse and a decade spent on the streets. Physically and mentally exhausted, something had to give. Asger

received a temporary spot at a rehab center and was provided with his own little apartment for him and his dog in the start of May. Within half a year, the conditions of Asger's homelessness had completely flipped.

Whether he would overcome his aversion for closed spaces and come through the loss of his local ecology of everyday relations and routines, this was at the time of writing an open question. Possibly he was entering a similar, inverted process of arrival into housing, mirroring his incremental adjustments to life on the streets. Or else it would be a temporary phase leading to someplace else. In any case, a return to his old spot on the streets seemed out of the question: his own body had drawn a non-negotiable line against entering homelessness in the form of rough sleeping again.

In the case of Gabriel, his navigation of homelessness, too, had steered into unexpected directions. As I last returned to his spot in May, his friend Dario had taken over, telling me that Gabriel had found a job as a car mechanic outside of town. This was surprising news, as Gabriel's efforts at employment had been unsuccessful for several years, and his physique, worn down from the life outdoors and daily drinking, had seemed unfit for hard labor to me. Only three months prior he had had an extended stay at the hospital, where an acute heart condition was treated. But here he was. Still sleeping at the local church, he now travelled to his work five days a week. At first, I thought this to mean that he had abandoned his spot altogether. But come weekend, he would return to his old routine, taking up his public residence for the days off.

Just as evictions had only ever been temporary, so did he himself only take leave to fulfill his obligations in a more regularized everyday life, structured by the spatiotemporal requirements of work. His spatiotemporal routines defied expectations: falling into rhythm with one of the dominant flows of the city, that of work, his home space on the streets still exerted a gravitational pull towards him. In a way, he mirrored the work / leisure divide of weekdays and weekend, except that his home challenged conventions, only manifesting for the duration of two days through the enactment of his familiar spatiotemporal routines.

It remained to be seen, how Gabriel's living arrangement would develop. Whether his sense of home would shift away from his old spot over time, or whether a sudden end to his employment, as had happened before, would make him return to his ways. Likely to change in ever ways, Gabriel's case illustrated the sheer endless variability of living arrangements on the streets. What is more, it pointed to unexpected potentials that could suddenly manifest within the ever-shifting terrain of homelessness. As always, it was uncertain what awaited beyond the next wave top; but for now, Gabriel had seized the momentum and navigated confidently into new waters.

5.7 Sub-Conclusion

Over the course of the last 5 sections of the analysis, a many-layered and highly diverse navigation of homelessness manifested in the spatiotemporal practices of my informants.

As we saw to begin with in section 5.2, the infrastructure of service provision constituted a spatiotemporal scaffolding for the daily activities of my informants, structuring their otherwise highly open-ended everyday life. In the context of the 24-hour city, shelters and libraries played an important role as spaces of permitted prolonged stay, where the presence of homeless people is not questioned. The shelters' function as collection points could be seen to attract and release people in a cyclical reiteration, creating the *pulsing formations of activity* that attuned my informants' rhythm with the city.

However, an overly strong reliance on this structure could and did backfire, as opening hours and capacity limits set natural limits for the harmonization of my informants' needs and the shelters' provisions. The synchronized rhythm between shelter and homeless could easily collapse, leaving in its stead an *arrhythmia* that could create the uncomfortable experience of being out of place and set to transgress the spatiotemporal norms of the city. What is more, especially night shelters were experienced as a high-stress environment, and for many of my informants, negative experiences of shelters turned them into places of fear or high alertness that afforded little room for rest and comfort. Integral to my informants' navigation of homelessness, the shelters could nonetheless contribute to the experience of homelessness as a *"full-time job"* that required constant attention.

In section 5.3, I traced the process of 'arrival' into homelessness. From feeling pushed out by society to tentative beginnings fraught with stress and missteps to slowly creating a new normal. Transitioning through a period of hardship with a steep learning curve, my informants found themselves 'on the other side', with seemingly no way back. Having developed quirks from the life on the streets and inverting many of the conventional standards of comfort, they experienced themselves as far away from the old normal.

This revealed a doubleness in their position on the margins. On the one hand, they actively embraced homelessness as a state of life and a *"lifestyle"*, navigating its terrain confidently. On the other hand, their constant articulation of difference reinforced their position on the sidelines. What materialized in the accounts of my informants was that the geographies of homelessness also had a normative compound, to which they positioned themselves time and again.

In section 5.4, I explored the role of time in homelessness and the potential for home in routines. For Alfred, home manifested as a spatiotemporal entity through the constant reiteration of practices in certain spaces at certain times. Affording significant ontological security for him, the intense sameness also held its trappings, as he found himself stuck in boredom and a strangely impervious passing of time. Fearing this sort of suspension in time and the rumination on his present life it could engender, Cracker shielded himself against sameness by constantly changing his days up.

Seeking out different places and people at differing times, his spatiotemporal navigation kept him on his toes and “never bored”.

But this constant change also turned his days into an unintelligible whirl of event. Whereas for Alfred, chronologies made way for sameness, for Cracker, they turned into pandemonium; both were removed from the linear progression of time. Both found stability in their orientation to the future, where the hope for spatiotemporal resolution in the form of moving someplace else shone as a beacon, lending them direction, and indeed, a purpose in the present. However, the intense contrast of their imagined lives with their current circumstances also created an inner strife that was tiring for them to compensate, especially as they had no influence on the actualization of their hopes. With Alfred, this found expression in the *isorhythmia* with his immediate surroundings no longer concealing the *arrhythmia* with society at large, leaving him restless. Here became apparent the limits of temporal navigation in homelessness, as the intense occupation with the soon-to-be compromised their current lives.

In section 5.5, I unfolded the dynamic navigation of my Paul and Malte that could fittingly be categorized as *street nomads*: constantly on the move, they plunged headfirst into the shifting terrain of homelessness. With few attachments to things, places, or people, they upheld a here-and-now mentality demanding intense adaptability. Planning day by day and taking few precautions, I showed how they willingly hazarded the consequences of such risky navigation, in order to maintain their sense of autonomy and control.

Though they found comforts in certain routines, their spatiotemporal routines were flexible, constituting generalized behaviors and activities that they could transfer and apply to shifting circumstances. In stark contrast with Alfred and Cracker, they held little concern with the future, focusing entirely on the current day. And in contrast with Asger and Gabriel, they did not find comfort in spatial continuity but in movement. From this constant movement and change emerged an unexpected form of belonging. Finding stability in a radical freedom and openness that constitute the underlying conditions of their existence, homelessness manifested as a way to be in the world, thus giving rise to its own inversion: a tentative yet tangible sense of home.

In section 5.6, I investigated the potentials for homemaking and threats of eviction in the context of my informants laying claim to part of the public space. For Asger and Gabriel, homemaking manifested as a many-layered spatiotemporal process. First, simply by staying put spatially, my informants built a strong territorial claim. Second, following the linear progression of time, they created an increasing number of routines and relations. On a third level these gained in complexity and robustness through the cyclical reiteration of his daily practices. Here, home manifested as routines, creating a particular rhythmicity around their space that firmly grounded them.

As became apparent, their homemaking practices had equipped them with considerable spatiotemporal resilience. Faced with various threats of eviction, my informants showed tenacity in maintaining their home space. Both Asger and Gabriel kept returning to their spots, defying hostile design or bans by the police and accepting precarious conditions around their stay. They were also both negotiating the permissibility of their home, engaging in a spatiotemporal

struggle over their right to stay. As their territorial claims lapsed, they re-oriented and adapted to the new conditions, showing remarkable versatility in their navigation of the homeless city.

Underneath the veneer of toughness, however, also became visible cracks in the foundations of their life on the streets. Both Asger and Gabriel were confronted with bodily limits to their capabilities at navigating homelessness. Asger was moving towards more regularized housing in the form of his own apartment, in order to protect himself from the wear and tear of rough sleeping. Gabriel seemed rejuvenated by his new job, creating a range of new spatiotemporal routines to meet the demands of work, while still upholding relations to his familiar spot.

CH 6: Discussion & Conclusion

When I arrive, Janos is already waiting for me: "Come inside! It's snowing." He smiles and leads me through the bushes into his domain. Everything is covered by a thin layer of pollen from the blossoming trees around the swamp. As I balance my way over the planks towards his house, it's as if I slowly step out of the city, treading into a different place altogether. Out of the muddy grounds rises a wooden shed, covered in a roof equal parts tarp and tree branches. Opening the plastic hanging functioning as door, Janos bids me welcome and waves to the mat lying on the elevated floor: "Come! Come! Make yourself comfortable." As I sit down, I take in my surroundings: the fireplace by the entrance, the bed in front of me at eye level, his storage space under filled with a wild assortment of dry foods, canned beverages, electronics, and camping gear, the walls adorned with a tourist poster of Mallorca. Janos sits on a tree trunk turned stool and goes right into it: "What a day, I tell you…."

Coming to Janos' place, it was truly like visiting someone at their house. This reflected not only in the place, which was a fully functional home for all seasons providing considerable comfort. It also reflected in Janos' demeanor as a host, inviting me over, showing me inside, welcoming me wholly into his home. Little, if any, of this held much semblance with common conceptions of homelessness. Indeed, it would have seemed wholly absurd to think of Janos in the category of home-*less*, as we were sitting comfortably in his abode.

And yet, as illustrated on the map of rhythms and routines, his round along the different shelters for shower and "feeding time" was an indispensable part of his daily route through the city, as he was wholly dependent on their provision of food. The case of Janos can be said to upend the divide between home and homelessness, instead occupying various positions on what Lancione (2023) has proposed as a spectrum of *home(lessness)*. Quite literally, he could be seen to travel across that spectrum: markedly *at home* when by his place in the swamplands, he could be seen to *become* homeless for a time as he sought out shelters, which he entered on the premise of not having a permanent place to stay.

This resonates with the findings of the analysis, where homelessness transpired as an incredibly varied and dynamic condition of life, finding different expressions at different times in the life of my informants. Virtually of them were set on some trajectory of change, wanting to transition into someplace else. This could be in a geographical sense, as with Paul and Wolfgang, who, disillusioned with homeless life in Denmark, returned to Germany. Change could also manifest in leaving the streets, as Luca and Felix moved into the more regularized space of the *herberg* and Asger transitioned towards his own apartment. And for Asger and Cracker, transformation was aspired to as a better place in the future, yet to take shape. This lays bare the limited usefulness of homelessness as a distinct category, and even more of *homeless* as a fixed identity marker. There is nothing fixed

and consistent about homelessness; rather, what emerges from the experiences of my informants is an underlying transience of homelessness.

Neither is home the straightforward place we make of it in everyday life. As the experience of my informants testifies to, home can manifest in myriad ways, both in a spatial, temporal, and normative understanding. While *spatial* continuity was conducive to homemaking, notions of home could also be found in the exact opposite, that is, constant movement. *Temporal* routines were shown to provide a reliable, rhythmical structure for the everyday life, but this stability could also be abandoned in favor of forward-reaching aspirations towards a future whose expected realization grounded my informants in the present. Moreover, as informants moved away from the perceived normal and towards a new *normal* of homelessness, this normative positionality on the margins could be articulated as a place of belonging.

None of this should obscure the very real hardship experienced in homelessness. The *"full-time job"* of being homeless put exacting demands on my informants on the best of days. And repeatedly, they reached the limits of navigation, as they were confronted with the underlying evictability of homelessness, experienced intense stuckness in their life position, or were simply overwhelmed by the endless practicalities of daily existence. The experience of at least temporary placelessness was part of this, too, as informants, turned away from a filled shelter, found themselves in *arrhythmia* with the city. Falling out of the spatiotemporal fabric of the city was felt as painful and forced my informants to find solutions that transgressed their own boundaries.

As they were navigating on the three interdependent levels of space, time and a normative tier, feelings of being out of place manifested whenever their own position was in discord with external pressures. In a spatial sense, there was a discomfort in having to move when wanting to stay, and in having to stay when wanting to move. In a temporal sense, sameness was experienced as uncomfortable when wanting variety, just as uncertainty was when longing for predictability. In a normative sense, normalcy was experienced as restrictive when feeling different, just as living differently felt painful when yearning for *"a normal life".* Here it became clear, how much the sense of belonging and home was bound up in a sense of control, which, when lost, could suspend my informants in an uncomfortable strife. Maybe nowhere did this become more apparent than in the physical limits that Asger's body had set for him, building a gap between his own constitution and the demands of a life on the streets that were impossible to bridge.

But wherever not confronted by absolute limits, my informants showed remarkable spatiotemporal resilience and exhibited an incredible resourcefulness as well as creativity in constantly finding new solutions to the ever-evolving demands of life in homelessness. Adept at finding the cracks and loopholes in their surroundings, they often subverted external pressures that pushed them away. This could be surprisingly simple, yet requiring tenacity and guts, as it did to 'simply' stay put or return to their space unallowed. Or this could require rather elaborate planning and execution, as it did to find and establish a safe sleeping spot. In navigating the shifting geographies of homelessness, all of my informants had found effective ways to do so.

Returning to the beginnings of this thesis and the questions Janos had raised, there is but one remaining open. Having outlined a variety of ways of navigating the homeless city, I also explored the potentials for home within homelessness. But to what ends does one navigate homelessness? Is it to find home within homelessness? Or is it to leave homelessness altogether, to leave the *"enclosed system"*, as Janos had said?

As I have shown, the many-layered and complex, often unexpected notions of home that we find among people living in homelessness call into question conventional ideas of home and homelessness. In line with Lancione (2023), I would argue that ending homelessness is only possible, if we first dismantle our current, narrow understanding of home and replace it with something else. From the place of *home(lessness)* that my informants inhabit emerge new iterations of home that can point to more nuanced, open-ended ways of conceiving of home, containing not only notions of arrival, stability and belonging but also elements of movement, adaptability, and change. These are tentative starting points for further explorations of the potential for and actualization of home spaces.

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